The Telling Line

IMAGE AND TEXT IN TWENTIETH CENTURY BRITAIN

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IMAGE AND TEXT IN TWENTIETH CENTURY BRITAIN

ALAN HORNE AND RICHARD LANDON

An exhibition in the
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library
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Preface

HE TELLING LINE is an exhibition, with a catalogue, which attempts to display and explicate the relationship between images and texts in twentieth century British books. The study of these interactions has become an important scholarly concern with an aesthetic dimension which has an obvious appeal as an exhibition.

The occasion of this exhibition acknowledges the presence in the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library of the Alan J. Horne Collection of modern British illustrated books, the generous donation of the co-author of this catalogue. The exhibition was timed to coincide with the publication of his book, *The Dictionary of Twentieth Century British Book Illustrators* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, now due in July 1994), which is expected to become the standard reference source in its field. While the span of time covered is from the turn of the century to its waning years, most emphasis has been placed on the period between 1915 and 1970.

Most of the books in the exhibition are drawn from the Horne Collection and other collections in the Fisher Library, but a significant contribution of books and original art work has been made by the Osborne Collection of the Toronto Public Library and one key book has been borrowed from the Mills Memorial Library, McMaster University. There are also a few items from the private collections of Alan Horne, Richard Landon and Marie Korey.

In an exhibition of this size, it would be foolish to attempt coverage of the whole range of illustration produced in the twentieth century. To deal with merely the major illustrators (even if one could identify to whom to offer such an accolade) is similarly impossible. The ninety-plus years of this century have produced innumerable book artists, working in various fields of interest and using a multitude of techniques. *The Telling Line* endeavours to present the work of just a handful of artists whom the organizers believe worthy of study. In addition, 'Image and Text', the exhibition's sub-title, is intended to indicate that an emphasis has been placed, gently and not

John Farleigh. The Story of David. *Black, 1934*

exclusively, on the illustrator as interpreter or critic, someone who adds a gloss to help the reader appreciate the text. Good illustrations can add a further level of enjoyment to the reader and we believe that our chosen few can do this.

The title of our exhibition is taken, with permission, from Douglas Martin's collection of essays on fifteen contemporary British illustrators. *The Telling Line* was published in 1989 by Julia MacRae Books in London, a division of Walker Books Ltd., and in New York by the Delacorte Press of the Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group.

Publication of the catalogue has been made possible by funding from the Friends of the Fisher Library and the bequest of Isobel Waugh, and special donations from the British Council (Ottawa), Hilary and David Nicholls, Ronald Peters, and from other individual friends of the Fisher Library. The Library's grateful thanks go to all those who have supported this project.

Richard Landon
Director, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library
February 1994

Introduction

Y THE END of the nineteenth century, the reproduction of illustrations had deteriorated badly, due largely to the introduction of poor half-tones and the process block. A few illustrators, such as William Nicholson and Gordon Craig, were producing good work by looking back to the days when woodcuts were customarily printed directly from the woodblock, and were using that technique. British book illustration was dominated in the first few years of the twentieth century, however, by those well known names of the 1890s — the Brocks, Arthur Rackham, Edmund Sullivan, Hugh Thomson and the Robinson brothers.

A new era of British book illustration did not really begin until the second decade of the twentieth century when Noel Rooke began in 1910 to teach wood engraving at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London. Rooke was one of the originators of the modern movement of wood engraving, and almost single-handedly he reinstated Bewick's white line technique. *The Woodcut of Today at Home and Abroad*, published by The Studio in 1927, a mere seventeen years after Rooke's pioneer work commenced, lists such artists as John Nash, Paul Nash, John Farleigh, Robert Gibbings, Eric Gill, Clare Leighton, and Gwen Raverat. This group of wood engravers, with their concerns for the design of the book, the compatibility of illustration and type, and the appearance of the book as a whole, revitalised book illustration in Britain. A few years later, a whole new group of illustrators appeared, and in 1931 *Modern Book-Illustration in Great Britain and America*, published by The Studio, included these illustrators in its lists — Edward Ardizzone, Barnett Freedman, Edward McKnight Kauffer, Lynton Lamb and Rex Whistler.

Along with the revival of wood engraving, many other factors conspired to make the inter-war years so exciting as far as book production was concerned. There was Harold Curwen's insistence on the importance of quality printing, whether it was for books or the production of an advertising brochure or even an invoice, and his employment and encouragement of many artists. Lithography and autolithography

developed rapidly at the hands of such fine craftsmen as Thomas Griffits and in such firms as the Curwen Press, the Baynard Press, Cowells, and Vincent Brooks, Day. This allowed businessmen like Frank Pick of London Transport and Jack Beddington of Shell to realize the potential of this new medium for their advertising purposes, and a whole new group of artists evolved as poster artists, producing works of art for commercial purposes. The developments in lithography had a considerable effect on the production of all sorts of books, but particularly on books for children, allowing the printing of brilliantly-coloured and gently-modulated picture books.

The beginning of the Second World War dealt a serious blow to the production of fine illustrated books. Many illustrators were 'otherwise employed' in the armed forces or, at best, worked as war artists; craftsmen printers were also conscripted; and paper and other supplies were of very poor quality and strictly rationed. The appearance of books, of course, suffered greatly. After the War, although these restrictions were slow to be removed, there was another revival of interest in producing good-looking books. A number of small publishing houses were established (though some did not survive for very long), such as John Westhouse, Allan Wingate, Peter Lunn, Lyndsay Drummond, Paul Elek and John Lehmann, and some of these employed new and established artists to illustrate their books and design book jackets. Many private presses no longer existed, but the Golden Cockerel Press continued to produce fine books until 1961, even if the quality was not always what it had been in its 'golden' years; and in 1947 the Folio Society was founded 'to produce editions of the world's great literature in a format worthy of the contents, at a price within the reach of everyman'. (How these words remind one of why Joseph Dent founded the 'Everyman Library' in 1906!) The Society's rather pompous announcement was a reaction against the *edition-de-luxe*; the real challenge was to equate good design with the mass-production techniques of the machine age.

Following the war, the general economic situation began slowly to improve, and a new optimism was reflected by the successful Festival of Britain in 1951. The National Book League's annual exhibitions of British Book Design continued and acted as a constant reminder to publishers, designers, artists and printers of the necessity of maintaining standards of production. The catalogues of these exhibitions frequently refer to increasing production costs, and these costs eventually produced some sad

events such as the closure of the Curwen Press in 1984. Many publishers looked elsewhere for affordable, fine printing, and found that it could be obtained in such places as Czechoslovakia, Italy and Hong Kong. A large proportion of certain categories of books, notably children's lithographed picture books, continue to be printed in those countries.

Since 1960, according to introductions to some of the National Book League exhibition catalogues, one would believe that book illustration, design and production in Britain were in the doldrums. There were, however, many fine artists working as illustrators, particularly in the field of children's books. It is important to note also that wood engraving had recently seen another revival of interest. After the 1950s, many established engravers had more or less finished working, and by the end of the 1960s, the teaching of wood engraving had been dropped from art school curricula. In the 1980s, there was another renaissance, and in 1984, the Society of Wood Engravers was reactivated under the chairmanship of Simon Brett. It is more than eighty years since Noel Rooke started to teach engraving at the Central School, and a new generation of artists is using the medium in many ways, producing limited edition prints, designs for advertising, and book illustrations. As the century draws to a close, we seem to have come full circle.

Alan Horne

Noel Rooke. The Old Vicarage Grantchester, *by Rupert Brooke. Sidgwick & Jackson, 1916*

CASE 1

William Nicholson, Gordon Craig and Noel Rooke

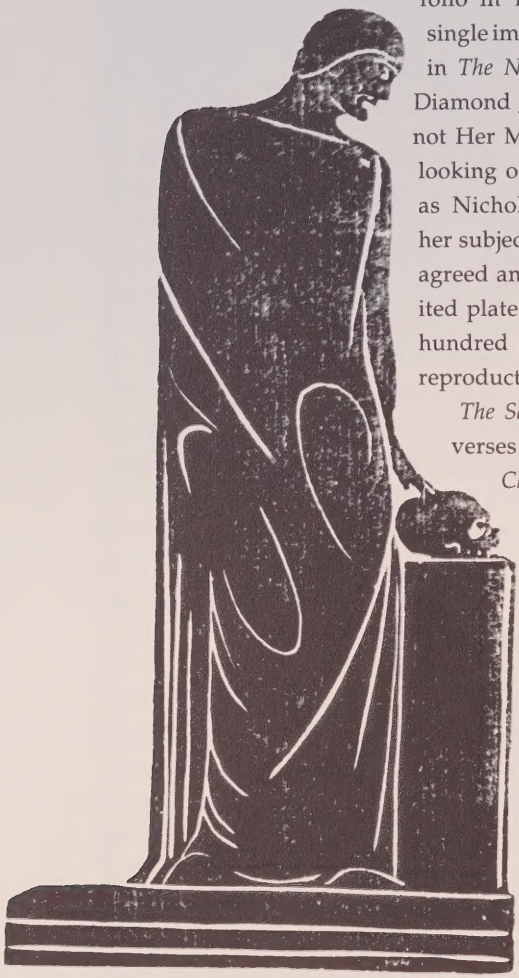
ILLIAM NICHOLSON (1872-1949) was born in the same year as Gordon Craig, Max Beerbohm, Will Rothenstein, Aubrey Beardsley and Bertrand Russell. After a few years of art training at Herkomer's School and the Académie Julian in Paris, he formed an association with James Pryde to produce theatrical and advertising posters using boldly coloured paper cut-outs, and married Pryde's sister Mabel in 1893. At this time he discovered the woodcut prints made by Joseph Crawhall (1821-96) which reflected the crude but vibrant English chapbook tradition of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The 'Beggarstaff Brothers', as Nicholson and Pryde call themselves, continued to produce posters but Nicholson turned enthusiastically to the woodcut medium and taught himself to engrave. Because of their bold, heavy lines his prints are usually referred to as 'woodcuts', but they were, in fact, engraved on the end grain of boxwood blocks, the larger blocks being made up of several interlocking small blocks by the firm of T.N. Lawrence. The first of his 'woodcuts' to be reproduced in a journal was *Persimmon* (the Prince of Wales's 1896 Derby winner), in the *Magazine of Art* in January 1897. Nicholson then moved on to the production of the books in this medium which established his reputation as a graphic artist. Encouraged by the publisher William Heinemann, he engraved twenty-six blocks for *An Alphabet* in 1897 (title page dated 1898) beginning with 'A was an Artist' a self portrait, and 'B for Beggar', which depicted James Pryde. For this book he evolved the system he followed over the next decade for publication. A few copies were printed from the blocks, hand coloured and signed by Nicholson, then a 'Library Edition', printed by chromolithography on special paper, and last a 'Popular Edition', printed lithographically on cartridge paper. In addition his contract stipulated that he could issue hand coloured separate prints of each image.

An Almanac of Twelve Sports, with verses for each month by Kipling, was also completed in 1897 (dated 1898), and was followed in 1898 by *London Types*, with

'quatorzains' by W.E. Henley (the image 'Hammersmith' is exhibited with Henley's lively verses about the vicissitudes of Liza). *Twelve Portraits* was published as a portfolio in 1899 and contains Nicholson's most famous single image, 'Queen Victoria', which had first appeared in *The New Review* in June 1897, coinciding with the Diamond Jubilee celebrations. Nicholson's Victoria was not Her Majesty majestic but rather a sombre, dowdy-looking old lady taking her Skye terrier for a walk or, as Nicholson himself said 'Her Majesty as most of her subjects would imagine her'. Her Majesty's subjects agreed and the print became very popular. (The exhibited plate is from the 1899 Paris edition, limited to one hundred copies, in which the plates are lithographic reproductions.)

The Square Book of Animals, a children's book with verses by Arthur Waugh, was published in 1899; *Characters of Romance*, a portfolio of lithographs, in 1900; a second series of *Twelve Portraits* in 1902; and *Oxford*, a portfolio of large lithographs on Japan vellum of the Oxford colleges, appeared in 1909. In all of Nicholson's books to this date the primary emphasis is on the images, the brief texts being used to explicate the plates. There is, of course, an interaction of image and text in *London Types* but it is not what one would commonly refer to as an 'illustrated book.'

Nicholson, after 1905, turned his attention almost entirely to his painting; portraits, still-life, and landscapes, including an important series of Spanish landscapes towards the end of his life (he died in 1949).



Gordon Craig. Hamlet, *by William Shakespeare. Cranach Press, 1930*

There were, however, some notable excursions into graphic illustration. His three great children's books, *The Velveteen Rabbit* (1922), *The Pirate Twins* (1929), and *Clever Bill* (1926) were all completely conceived and executed by him in colour lithography. He illustrated books for W.E. Henley, and illustrated Gay's *Polly*, for which he also did the costume designs for the 1922 stage production. His most completely realized book illustrations of the 1920s, however, were for his friend Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* in 1929. This autobiographical fiction first appeared in 1928 without illustrations and proved very popular, touching a vein of nostalgia for the unspoiled English countryside before the Great War that was very sympathetic to Nicholson's sensibilities. He attacked the project with great enthusiasm and produced seven full-page colour illustrations and twenty-five delightful vignettes of foxes, cats, and other creatures as well as a marvellously inventive dust-wrapper, cover design and end papers. (The copy on display has a presentation inscription by Nicholson worked into the design.)

The full range of Nicholson's graphic art is considerable and various but it retains a distinctive style throughout his long career. Even the unsigned cobble-grained cover for a book of Robert Graves's poems (Graves was his son-in-law for a while), is easily recognizable as Nicholson's.

GORDON CRAIG (1872-1966) first met Nicholson in 1893 when he was shown 'how to cut the first ditch in a piece of boxwood' and he continued to engrave and cut woodblocks both on the end and side grains for the rest of his long life. Craig was, of course, much more famous as a theatre designer and producer; the son of Ellen Terry, an actor in Irving's Lyceum Theatre, the lover of Isadora Duncan, and the *agent provocateur* of international theatre for half a century.

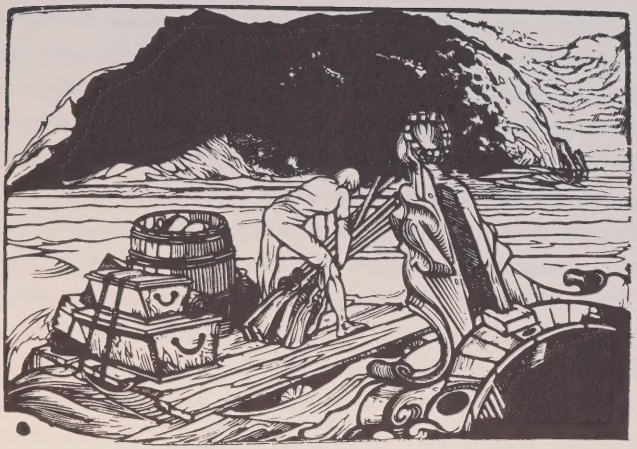
In 1898 Craig founded a magazine called *The Page*, through which to propound his ideas for theatre reform, and illustrated it with many of his wood engravings. He founded several magazines, the best known and longest running being *The Mask*, for which he provided much of the writing and most of the illustration under several pseudonyms. His style varied between a heavy-line tradition deriving from Nicholson, and a white-line style used with stylized theatrical figures where he was able, by careful inking, to use the grain of the wood as part of the design.

Craig's graphic illustrations reproduced in various ways adorn his own books: *A Book of Portraits* (1899), *The Art of the Theatre* (1905), *On the Art of the Theatre* (1911), *Woodcuts and Some Words* (1924), *Nothing; or, the Bookplate* (1925), *Index to the Story of my Days* (1957) and others. His most spectacular book illustrations, however, are those done for the Cranach Press *Hamlet,* produced by Count Harry Kessler at his private press in Weimar. There are two editions of the Cranach Press *Hamlet:* the German text with the translated extracts from the Hamlet legend by Belleforest and Saxo Grammaticus and seventy-four woodcuts by Craig, published in 1929 (dated 1928), and the English edition of 1930 (here exhibited). This contained eighty illustrations and a commentary by J. Dover Wilson, printed separately and inserted in the rear of the three hundred paper copies (there were also fifteen on Japan and seven on vellum).

Craig had long been obsessed with *Hamlet,* having played the role five times between 1890 and 1897. Designs for staging the play survive from as early as 1899, and when he began to cut his 'black figures' in 1907, many were characters from *Hamlet.* The figure 'Hamlet with Skull', cut in 1912 and reproduced in *Black Figures* in 1989, is an early state of the cut used for Act V, Scene 1 of the Cranach Press edition (displayed) where it has been altered to remove the teeth from the skull. His fascination with designing a production of *Hamlet* culminated in 1912 with the staging of the play at the Moscow Art Theatre.

Craig was introduced to Kessler by William Rothenstein in 1903 and their association, documented by an extensive correspondence, lasted until Kessler's death in 1937. The first contract for the collaborative *Hamlet* was drawn up in 1912, which provided for Craig to supply notes to the play as well as the illustrations. Kessler was a practical man and immediately engaged Edward Johnston to begin work on a new typeface based on fifteenth century faces used by Fust and Schoeffer and Sweynheym and Pannartz. Emery Walker provided a photographic mock-up of a double-page opening, with commentary surrounding the text, and this became the basic format for *Hamlet.* Craig created some more woodcuts but all work ground to a halt in 1914 and was not resumed until 1927 when the energy of Kessler shifted the project into high gear again. *Hamlet* was one of the great collaborative book projects of the twentieth century and the colophon admirably sums it up:

> COUNT HARRY KESSLER planned the typographical arrangement of this volume. EDWARD GORDON CRAIG designed and himself cut on wood the



Gordon Craig. Robinson Crusoe, *by Daniel Defoe. Basilisk Press, 1979*

illustrations. ERIC GILL cut the title. THE TYPE (18 Point, 12 Point and 10 Point black letter) was designed by EDWARD JOHNSTON after that used by Fust and Schoeffer in their Mainz Psalter of 1457, it was cut by Edward Prince and completed after his death by G.T. Friend.

The paper was made of pure hemp fibre and linen by a process devised in joint research by Count Harry Kessler and Aristide and Gaspard Maillol. The book was printed on the handpresses of the Cranach Press, Weimar from February to October 1930. Count Harry Kessler, J.H. Mason & Max Goertz supervised the setting of the type & printing. The proofs were read by F.G. Hutt of the Cambridge University Press and H. Wengler-Dresden. Compositors, Walter Tanz, H. Schulze, Ernst Rudolph, P. Neubert. Pressmen, H. Gage-Cole, M. Kopp, Gustav Lepenies, Gustav Loeckle. Assistants: Hugo Bergmann, Franz Hornik, Walter Rommel, Rudolf Richter.

Craig also produced, over a number of years, a series of wood engravings for another of his favourite books, *Robinson Crusoe*. He began them in the 1930s and continued, fitfully, throughout most of the rest of his life. Like many of his projects it remained unfinished but in 1979 *Robinson Crusoe* was published by The Basilisk Press in an edition of four hundred seventy copies, with an introduction by his son Edward A. Craig. It constitutes the other major illustrated book by him.

NOEL ROOKE (1881-1953) was, in many ways, the catalyst for the whole modern movement in wood engraving. It was not that he himself produced a great number of prints, nor did he illustrate a great many books, but he either trained or taught most of the prominent practitioners of the 'revival'. He was a founder of the Society of Wood Engravers in 1920, which also included Eric Gill, Robert Gibbings, Gwen Raverat, John Nash and Philip Hagreen, all of them white line moderns in the technical tradition of Bewick, and moving away from the chapbook tradition of Nicholson and Craig.

Rooke began his career as a student of Edward Johnston in 1898 at the Central School of Arts and Crafts. By 1905 he was a member of the staff, teaching 'Book Illustration, Lettering, Black and White etc.' and in 1912 was allowed, after much opposition, to introduce wood engraving to the syllabus. In 1914 he became head of the School of Book Production and remained an active teacher almost until his death. His most successful students were Robert Gibbings, Clare Leighton, John Farleigh, George Mackley, Rachel Garnett and Vivien Gribble.

Rooke realized early that 'process' reproduction of illustrations for books was profoundly unsatisfactory. (The muddy colour reproductions of his water colour illustrations for Robert Louis Stevenson's *An Inland Voyage* (1908) are an example). In a 1945 lecture he recalled that

> inspired by the thought of Johnston's calligraphy I started in 1905 to make engravings on the same basis as calligraphy, that is, designing and producing in terms of the strokes of a brush or pen or pencil ... from that start came the group of engravers on 'Autographic' principles, which flourished between the wars.

The first fruit of Rooke's experiments appeared in 1906 when he engraved a brilliant series of hands performing complex calligraphic movements for Johnston's *Writing & Illuminating & Lettering*, although there is at least one hand illustrated in Douglas Cockerell's *Bookbinding, and the Care of Books* of 1901, in the same series.

If the 'revival of wood engraving' as it applies to book illustration can be dated from 1915, when Gill's *Devil's Devices* and Raverat's *Spring Morning* were published, then *The Old Vicarage Grantchester*, by Rupert Brooke, of 1916, must also be considered a primary incunabulum. The double page illustration by Rooke, called a woodcut, captures the Edwardian nostalgia of Brooke's poem through the skilful contrasts of black and white which suggest the late afternoon shade in the leafy garden:

Stands the church clock at ten to three?
And is there honey still for tea?

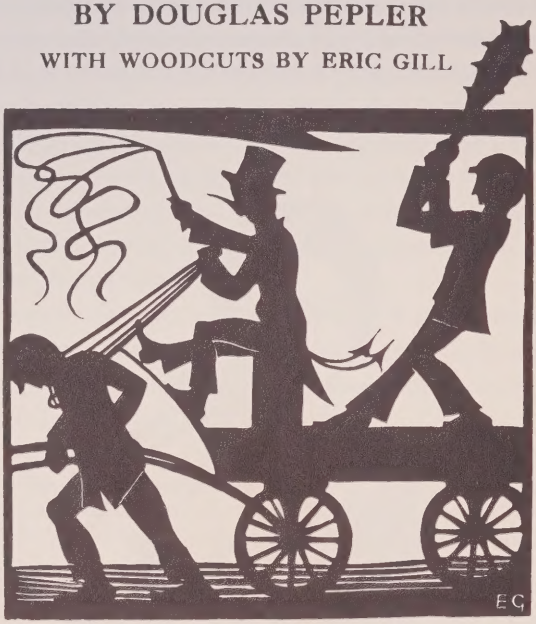
Rooke also contributed illustrations to his own book *Woodcuts and Wood Engravings* (1926) where he clearly and succinctly differentiates the two processes, and provided wood engravings for the Golden Cockerel Press *The Birth of Christ* in 1925. In 1946 his water colours of plants were decently reproduced in the King Penguin *Flowers of Marsh and Stream*. Rooke's great legacy, however, was his forty years of teaching and the testimony of his influence from many of the most skilful and imaginative book illustrators of this century.

Noel Rooke. The Birth of Christ. *Golden Cockerel Press, 1925*

THE DEVIL'S DEVICES
OR
CONTROL *versus* SERVICE

BY DOUGLAS PEPLER

WITH WOODCUTS BY ERIC GILL



Published at
THE HAMPSHIRE HOUSE WORKSHOPS, HAMPSHIRE HOG LANE, HAMMERSMITH, LONDON
1915

CASE 2

Eric Gill, Robert Gibbings and John Buckland Wright

RIC GILL (1882-1940) began taking lessons from Edward Johnston at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in 1899, one of his fellow students being Noel Rooke. He learned to cut lettering in stone, which became the basis of his career, and moved on to stone sculpture where his technique of working directly with the block, without using models, was revolutionary in English art. In 1904 he began engraving wood blocks with lettering for Count Harry Kessler and contributed the chapter 'Inscriptions in Stone', with illustrations, to Johnston's *Writing & Illuminating & Lettering* in 1906. His first real foray into book illustration was in 1915, when he illustrated Douglas Pepler's *The Devil's Devices* with 'woodcuts' (really wood engravings) which, although it was published by The Hampshire House Workshops and printed by The Westminster Press, is really the first book of the St. Dominic's Press.

Douglas Pepler and Gill, with their families, were members of an arts and crafts community at Ditchling which was based on the life of pre-industrial craftsmanship and the spirit of Roman Catholicism. *The Devil's Devices*, a quirky and often amusing indictment of modern living, complete with Everyman being led astray from the true path by the Devil in various guises, is typical of many St. Dominic's books. Gill's illustrations, which are the first demonstration of his mastery of engraving technique and of graphic design, capture perfectly the spirit of the text. The title-page engraving is called 'Dumb-driven Cattle' and is annotated

> A working man is seen harnessed to a DEVIL-driven cart. The Author is discovered in the act of clubbing the DEVIL, whom he would exterminate as he would any other vicious beast. It is to be observed that the Author is also in the cart.

Gill provided illustrations for a great many books throughout his career but his most fruitful collaboration was with Robert Gibbings and the Golden Cockerel Press.

His first Golden Cockerel book was by his sister, Enid Clay, *Sonnets and Verses*, published in 1925, when he also illustrated *The Song of Songs*, a text which allowed free rein to his strongly sensuous imagination. *Procreant Hymn*, by E. Powys Mathers (1926), with five copper-plate engravings, provided even more erotic opportunities, but his two great masterpieces of sustained book illustration, *The Canterbury Tales* (1929-31) and *The Four Gospels* (1931), were both illustrated with wood engravings.

In 1927 Gill had provided wood engravings for the Golden Cockerel *Troilus and Criseyde* which included sixty decorative borders, as well as full-page illustrations, a title-page and tail-pieces. Here he had attempted what Gibbings referred to as 'the real marriage of wood and metal', that is the integration of image and text through the careful arrangement of the constituent parts. *The Canterbury Tales* is, of course, a much longer text and the process of 'marrying' the eighteen point Caslon Old Face with the exuberant blocks of illustration and decoration was continued and accentuated with both partners taking active roles. It might be expected that the earthy text of Chaucer would appeal to Gill's carnal sensibilities, and it did. His sensuous mixture of black-line and white-line illustrations, together with the border foliage with naked nymphs being pursued by naked pygmies provide a framework of sexuality that some critics felt went rather beyond what one called the 'homely geniality' of Chaucer. The captions for them, such as 'Woman climbing floreated phallus' which appears four times, may be taken as an indication of playfullness, and the engravings constitute book decoration rather than book illustration.

The Four Gospels was planned in a very different way. First of all there was the new typeface, Golden Cockerel, commissioned by Gibbings and delivered in 18 point size, thus ensuring that the book would be in a large format, which Gibbings generally preferred while Gill liked small books. It was also clear that this book was to be a joint venture with Gibbings as the designer. They had many discussions, and even disagreements, but worked together harmoniously, each acquiescing to the strongly held views of the other partner. The argument Gibbings always regretted losing was whether the prose portions of the text should be justified. Gill felt that even spacing and even colour on the page would more than compensate for the ragged right edges but Gibbings was uncomfortable with the result.

Their first, amusing, disagreement was over what text to use. Gill as a Catholic naturally wanted the Douai version but Gibbings said he would prefer the Authorized

version. 'Authorized by whom?' asked Gill. 'King James' replied Gibbings. 'What authority had he?' asked Gill. The King James version, however, was finally agreed upon. Each partner read each Gospel carefully and together planned where the emphasis of illustration should be. The type was then set, under Gibbings's direct supervision, leaving space for the large illustrations and using the 36 point and 24 point titling capitals which had been specially cut to harmonize with the basic 18 point type. The spaces left on purpose and by accident were then filled with illustrations and decorations by Gill on proofs sent to him. Gibbings believed that the remarkable unity of the book, the harmony between the wood engravings and the type, was achieved because Gill was forced to adapt his designs to the available spaces. The *Gospels* finally contained 65 engravings and has been recognized as one of the greatest of private press books, comparable in its influence with the Kelmscott Press *Chaucer* and the Doves Press *Bible*. Many years after Gill's death Gibbings could proudly refer to *The Four Gospels* as 'our edition' while acknowledging that it contains Gill's greatest illustrations.

ROBERT GIBBINGS (1889-1958) was perhaps the most illustrious of the students of Noel Rooke. Born in Cork, he went to London in 1911 to study art at the Slade School and because he had two mornings free he enrolled in Rooke's class at the Central School of Arts and Crafts. Rooke persuaded him to try wood engraving and he cut three blocks for a colour print of a naked man on a hill top to accompany verses he had written. His earliest surviving engraving is from 1913 and depicts two pigs in silhouette. From 1914 to 1918 Gibbings served in the Royal Munster Fusiliers, was wounded, but continued to engrave blocks for separate reproduction using a 'vanishing line' technique he had discovered. After the war he settled in London as a commercial artist and in 1922 was commissioned by Jonathan Cape to provide illustrations for a new edition of *Erewhon*. Although the publisher seemed pleased enough with his 'first book' Gibbings remarked in 1948 that he regarded it as a 'pretty poor effort'.

The year 1924 marked a significant turning point in Gibbings's career: he acquired the Golden Cockerel Press from Harold Taylor and he met Eric Gill. Under Gibbings's directorship the Press blossomed as he immediately contacted the leading wood engravers to commission illustrations for his books. Most were members of the Society of Wood Engravers, of which Gibbings was a founding member and first secretary.

Robert Gibbings. Glory of Life, *by Llewelyn Powys. Golden Cockerel Press, 1934*

Ironically, Gill at first rejected his overtures, primarily on the grounds that he was not Catholic, but the opportunity to provide illustrations for his sister's *Sonnets and Verses* changed Gill's mind and the two men became very close friends. The closeness of their friendship, with Gill often visiting Waltham St. Lawrence ('after supper Mr. and Mrs. G. danced and we enjoyed ourselves in nakedness' reads one diary entry) was matched by their artistic collaboration, which culminated in *The Four Gospels* in 1931. Gill had by then set up his own publishing firm and in 1933 Gibbings was forced to sell the Golden Cockerel Press; they had drifted apart anyway. In 1953, in an affectionate short memoir of Gill, Gibbings recalled the golden days of yore:

> Eric was the perfect collaborator. He was always ready to accept a suggestion, as he was always capable of carrying it to a wonderful fruition.

Gibbings's own artistic output was prodigious: over a thousand wood engravings appeared in the sixty-one books he illustrated, fourteen of which he also wrote himself. Curiously, only one book, *A Circle of the Seasons* by E. Powys Mathers (1929), is illustrated with copper plate engravings, although he was obviously very adept in this medium as well. His own comment on these illustrations, made in 1948, was,

> I rather like the frontispiece, and I don't mind the storks opposite p.16. But perhaps the best is the lady opposite p.24 (here displayed).

The lady bears a striking resemblance to photographs of his wife Moira.

Glory of Life, by Llewelyn Powys, illustrated for the Golden Cockerel Press just after it had been taken over by Christopher Sandford, had everything that Gibbings liked about books. He was in perfect sympathy with the text (a kind of hymn to the spirit of nature and natural processes) and became a close friend of Powys; he was able to design a 'big book' and he liked big books; and he was able to both illustrate and decorate the text. The opening of frontispiece and title-page, with the lovely large red lettering facing the large black gull, is perfectly balanced and harmonious, and perhaps represents his most striking piece of illustration. (The copy displayed is signed by him on the frontispiece).

Gibbings made his first trip to the South Seas in 1929 and was to return there several times. His keen observation of nature and his skill in portraying flora and fauna, combined with the exotic natural surroundings of Tahiti and the Caribbean, produced several books, but none more appealing than *Blue Angels and Whales*, published as

Robert Gibbings. A Circle of the Seasons, *by E. Powys Mathers. Golden Cockerel Press, 1929*

a 'Pelican Special' by Penguin Books in 1938. It contained thirty-three wood engravings and fifteen illustrations from pencil sketches, including the coloured frontispiece (displayed). In this book, for the first time, Gibbings became wholly an illustrator, making sense of his text for a wide audience. Of course, the production standards at Penguin were not of the same kind as those he was accustomed to, but it is a handsome book nonetheless. Most importantly, its press run was fifty thousand copies and Gibbings became a truly popular author and artist.

Right at the end of his 'Some Recollections' Gibbings wrote

> I wanted more than ever to get that same closeness to nature to which I had referred in my early poem. So, on the floor of my studio I chalked out the shape of a flat-bottomed boat...

Built by Gibbings, with some help, the boat, *Willow,* was first used to explore the river Thames and the result of that expedition was *Sweet Thames Run Softly,* published by Dent in 1940 in an edition of twenty-five hundred copies. By 1948 it had been reprinted ten times and forty thousand copies were in circulation in Britain alone. Its success launched another career for Gibbings. Four more 'river' books were to follow, as well as other volumes of personal memoirs, ending, appropriately, with *Till I End My Song* in 1957. All were extensively illustrated with wood engravings, integrated closely with the text and, in some ways, they represent a more harmonious whole than many of the Golden Cockerel books.

Gibbings continued to provide illustrations for books other than his own and in 1956 was commissioned by the Limited Editions Club to illustrate Darwin's *Journal of Researches*, the account of the Beagle voyage. This was clearly a congenial project for him: the text was not only one of the great works of natural history but also a wonderfully written travel narrative about a part of the world to which he was attracted. It could also be produced in a large format. A challenge was provided by the original illustrations from early editions and Gibbings worked around them, his forty-seven wood engravings integrated with facsimiles of the original eight engraved by Ralph Beedham. The result was a beautiful edition of a classic work.

Although Gibbings has been accused of sacrificing quality to quantity as an illustrator he fully realized his ambition, enunciated in 1922 when he was looking for work:

> 'I should very much like' he wrote, 'to do some decorations for really first-class books, especially where it would be possible to keep in touch with the printer and treat the book as a whole.'

JOHN BUCKLAND WRIGHT (1897-1954) was born in New Zealand but raised in England and educated conventionally at Clifton, Rugby and Oxford, where he took degrees in history and architecture. His service during World War I, between Rugby and Oxford, was distinguished, even though he was turned down by the British Army because of a severe stammer, and he won a Croix de Guerre with a Scottish ambulance unit. He decided to become an artist and on the strength of a small inheritance moved to Belgium in 1926. After his marriage, at the end of 1929, he moved to Paris and lived there until forced to return to London by the advent of World War II.

JBW, as he was commonly known, was entirely self-taught as an artist and executed an important series of watercolours and oils. His interest in wood engraving was stimulated by reading Gordon Craig's *Woodcuts and Some Words* (1924) and he quickly mastered the technique, exhibiting with the Xylographes Belges in 1927. His first book illustrations were done for *The Collected Sonnets of John Keats* published by A.A.M. Stols (Halcyon Press) in 1930 and he continued to work for the Dutch press throughout the decade.

In 1936 he received his first commission from the Golden Cockerel Press when Christopher Sandford asked him to illustrate Powys Mathers's exotic tale *Love Night*.

This marked a turning point in JBW's career, artistically and financially, as he was to continue to produce 'Cockerels' until his death, over two hundred illustrations for seventeen books. His contract with Sandford provided a quarterly payment of forty pounds in exchange for priority attention to Golden Cockerel books and, tiny as this sum seems today, it meant the difference between near starvation and comparative affluence in the Paris of the thirties.

One of the features of JBW's art that appealed strongly to Sandford was the amorous nature of the drawings and this appealed to the patrons of the Golden Cockerel Press as well. JBW had spent a considerable time learning to draw the female nude from life and the sensuous texts chosen for him to illustrate fitted well with his romantic and erotic views. For *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1938), Théophile Gautier's somewhat naughty novel, he created eight copper engravings, (twelve for the limited issue of fifty copies), a technique he had learned at Stanley Hayter's Atelier 17. Because the copper engravings had to be printed on separate leaves which were tipped in, the illustrations are not integrated with the text in the way that the best of the JBW wood engravings are. They do, however, catch perfectly the spirit of the text and the scene where Rosette discovers that Isnabel is really a woman ('A woman, she said 'A woman! oh Théodore!') which is displayed, is finely drawn and lushly erotic.

For Swinburne's *Hymn to Proserpine* (1944), one of a series of Swinburne's purple poems illustrated by JBW, he again turned to wood engravings. These works had the additional appeal of classical Greek themes which provided a strong resonance for him. He loved drawing fauns (it is said that he had pointy ears) and figures in friezes, which provided very attractive headpieces while still contributing illustrative elements to the texts. Greek mythology is rife with erotic imagery and thus JBW could extend himself in keeping with his dictums as expressed in a letter to Christopher Sandford in 1938:

> Eroticism is not *what* is drawn but the *way* it's drawn. A restrained but full-blooded eroticism is infinitely more expressive and suggestive than any amount of obvious stuff.

JBW's masterpiece of book illustration was Keats' *Endymion*, which contained fifty-eight wood engravings. He cut the first block in February 1944, in the midst of blackouts and fire bombs, and was again engaged in a text for which he felt a great romantic sympathy. Occasionally he went too far, at least for Sandford:

> I rather agree however about the 3 girls being rather too well developed. I had even thought of redoing the block because of it, but decided that it takes all sorts to make a world and if the girls in the rest of the book can keep their titties small there will be no harm done. And anyway Walter Pater refers to the 'deep-bosomed daughters of the Ocean' and he should have known something about it.

JBW did not complete his work on *Endymion* until January 1947 and it was published in November in an edition of five hundred copies, one hundred of which were bound in full vellum. It was printed with Caslon Old Face 18 point type on hand-made paper and is a handsome book from all points of view. Sandford reacted strongly to reviews which said that the type was hand-set and that *Endymion* represented a reversion to the private press movement of fifty years before. In *Cockalorum*, his bibliography of Golden Cockerel books published between 1943 and 1948, he tried to set the record straight with regard to mechanical composition and power presses and discussed in detail the production methods of his press. The success of *Endymion* he attributed to the vision of John Buckland Wright, which

> approaches that of Keats as closely as is possible for any artist working in our generation.

John Buckland Wright. Hymn to Proserpine, *by Algernon Charles Swinburne. Golden Cockerel Press, 1944*

David Jones

AVID JONES (1895-1974), who was born of Welsh and English stock, showed remarkable talent in drawing as a small child. He studied art at the Camberwell School of Art (1910-14), and after service with the Royal Welsh Fusiliers during the First World War, returned to his studies for another two years at the Westminster School of Art.

Jones met Eric Gill in 1921, and after being received into the Roman Catholic Church that same year, went to live with Gill and his family, joining the community founded by Hilary Pepler at Ditchling in Sussex. Jones learned wood engraving and illustrated various publications for the St. Dominic's Press, including *In Petra* (1923) and *Libellus Lapidum* (1924). When the Gills moved to Capel-y-ffin near Abergavenny, and subsequently to 'Pigotts', a house in Buckinghamshire, Jones paid many long visits. He was engaged to Gill's daughter Petra, but the engagement was broken off in 1927 and Jones never married.

He illustrated several Golden Cockerel Press books with wood engravings, including *The Book of Jonah* (1926) and *The Chester Play of the Deluge* (1927). Both of these were reprinted in 1979 and 1977 respectively by the Rampant Lions Press for Clover Hill Editions to remedy the effect of the inadequate printing achieved at the Golden Cockerel Press on first publication. Jones had begun to engrave on copper in 1925, and in 1929 a young Bristol bookseller, Douglas Cleverdon, published an edition of Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, illustrated with ten copper engravings. Eye trouble forced him to give up engraving in 1930, and in 1933 he suffered a nervous breakdown and made no more prints. The catalogue of an exhibition of the work of the Rampant Lions Press held at the Fitzwilliam Museum in 1982 declares that,

> In the short space of time that he was engraving, he produced a remarkable amount of work of great variety; some witty, some mystical; some boldly cut, some delicately shaded; some simple to print, some virtually impossible ... his

prints are nearly always distinguished by their excellence of design, personal commitment and absolute individuality. At their peak, in the *Deluge* and *Ancient Mariner* sets, they are major achievements of book illustration.

Concurrently with his engravings but continuing into his later years, Jones was also a prolific and highly acclaimed water colourist, producing many English and Welsh landscapes, still-lifes, and complex drawings of religious and mythical subjects. He began making inscriptions fairly late in his career, either for himself, as gifts for friends, or as illustrations to his own books. Often likened to William Blake because of his achievement in two arts and the religious vision which pervades his work, Jones began writing in the late 1920s. His *In Parenthesis* (1937) has been recognized as one of the literary masterpieces of the Great War, and *The Anathemata* (1952) was hailed by W. H. Auden as 'very probably the finest long poem written in English this century.'

David Jones. Pertinent & Impertinent. *St. Dominic's Press, 1926*

Jones was elected a member of the Society of Wood Engravers in 1927; C.B.E. (1955); Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature (1961); and Companion of Honour (1974).

[An exhibition devoted entirely to the life and work of David Jones will be shown in the Fisher Library, October–December 1995, to commemorate the centenary of his birth]

Gwen Raverat. Farmer's Glory, *by A.G. Street. Faber and Faber, 1934*

CASE 3

Gwen Raverat, Clare Leighton and Reynolds Stone

GWEN RAVERAT (1885-1957) was born a Darwin, or as her astronomer father Sir George Darwin said: 'You've none of you ever seen a Darwin who wasn't mostly Wedgwood.' She paid homage to, and extended, the illustriousness of both sides of her heritage, writing late in her life, her charming memoir *Period Piece* (1952) illustrated with her pen drawings. It vividly evokes Victorian Cambridge and the lives of the sons of Charles Darwin. In 1939 Gwen Raverat provided the coloured wood engravings for *The Bird Talisman*, an eastern fairy tale written by her great-uncle Harry Wedgwood, and first published in 1852. The first two editions were illustrated with pen-and-ink drawings but, as Raverat said,

> they were very few and very small, and we children always felt that the appearance of the book was rather arid; so that I have at last overcome my feeling of sacrilege in tampering with a sacred work and have tried to illustrate it myself.

The success of her attempt was readily apparent to the world outside the Darwin family.

Gwen Raverat was a pioneer of the wood engraving revival. She attended the Slade School from 1908 to 1911, but taught herself wood engraving in 1908 with the help of her cousin's wife, Elinor Monsell. From 1909 until her death she made single prints from engraved blocks, but her first illustrated book, *Spring Morning*, poems by her cousin Frances Cornford, was one of the two which launched the new wave of book illustration (the other was Gill's *Devil's Devices*) in 1915. The small illustrations, decorating as well as illustrating a small book, catch the mood of the verses and indicate the kind of harmony which obviously existed between artist and author.

In 1911 Gwen Darwin had married Jacques Raverat, a mathematician and artist, but in 1915 he was diagnosed as having multiple sclerosis and he died in 1925, leaving her

with two young daughters. She continued to make single prints and was a founder of the Society of Wood Engravers in 1920, but did not become known to the general public until the publication of *The Cambridge Book of Poetry for Children* in 1932. This was followed by many commissions from commercial publishers, including *Farmer's Glory*, by A.G. Street, in 1934. In this book her obvious love for and understanding of the rural life of the countryside around Cambridge is beautifully expressed in small and medium-size engravings which exploit her great sensitivity to the qualities of darkness and light. She also drew farm animals with precision and carefully placed them in the context of her designs.

In 1950 she received a different kind of commission when she was asked to provide decorations for Ellic Howe's *The London Bookbinders: 1780-1806:* Each chapter began with a small wood engraved vignette of the different aspects of bookbinding (beating, sewing, finishing and so on), printed with sepia ink, which gave a hint of illustration along with its charming decorative effect. The frontispiece was also a vignette, but larger, illustrating the results of bookbinding: the corner of a library replete with decorated spines, and the bibliophile, dressed in gown and nightcap, choosing his bed-time book. This book, printed by the Dropmore Press in an edition of two hundred fifty copies, was one of Raverat's few excursions into the realm of the private press.

CLARE LEIGHTON (1898-1989) had one thing in common with Gwen Raverat, a great love and understanding of the rural countryside. Their art differed in many ways, the most noticeable being size: most Raverat images are small whereas Leighton liked to work with large engravings with lots of figures boldly delineated in intense black heightened with delicate white lines.

She was the daughter of two popular writers, Marie Connor Leighton and Robert Leighton, and was privately educated. Her artistic education was at the Brighton School of Art and the Slade School and from 1920 to 1923 she attended the Central School where she learned wood engraving from Noel Rooke. He also helped to enlarge her horizons and her understanding by telling her 'A drawing is to a print very much what speech is to literature'. Her first commercial encouragement came in 1923 when Eric Gill purchased a print of 'The Malthouse', only her second engraving.

Clare Leighton. The Farmer's Year. *Collins, 1933*

Leighton's first substantial commission for book illustration was for a Macmillan edition of Hardy's *Return of the Native* in 1929, and for it she did over fifty wood engravings. This book was a commercial success and almost all the books written and illustrated by her were issued by large publishing firms: besides Macmillan, Collins, Gollancz, Heinemann, Duckworth, Longman, Lane, Rinehart, Harpers, Random House, Putnam's, Viking, Houghton Mifflin, Doubleday and Crowell all published her books. She never did a book with the Golden Cockerel Press or the Gregynog Press. Her decision to concentrate on large firms was perhaps influenced by her close liaison with H.N. Brailsford, the editor of *The New Leader* and a leading socialist thinker and writer, which lasted from 1927 to 1938. This policy had the advantage of making her work very widely known and the disadvantage that the production standards used for her books varied widely and her engravings were often not displayed to their best effect.

In 1931 Duckworth and Random House published in a large format an edition of *Wuthering Heights* with twelve of Leighton's dramatic wood engravings. She captured something of the force of this obsessive novel with, for instance, the image of Heathcliff hammering his head against a tree after learning of the death of Catherine (displayed). All the figures are set in an appropriately bleak landscape and she experimented with new engraving techniques. This was also the year that she visited a logging camp near Ottawa and created a series of six large, powerful engravings called 'Lumber Camp.'

The Farmer's Year, written and illustrated with twelve full-page engravings by Leighton was published in 1938 by Collins in London and Longman in New York. It contains her most successful work, a perfect integration of image and text. Its bold images in large format were striking enough to cause Eric Gill to write

> Bewick and Raverat have done little engravings that are big in spirit, but no one in our time has succeeded better than Clare Leighton in penetrating the breadth of the life of the earth on a scale so grand.

This was also very successful commercially, running to three impressions in three months. For November (displayed) ploughing was chosen as the theme and the figures of the horses and man set against the dramatic sweep of the hill is particularly effective. The ploughed earth exhibits a tactile quality and displays the effectiveness of her technique most successfully.

In December 1938 Clare Leighton again visited the United States and never returned to England. Something of her decision to become American is explained in a fictional memoir, *Sometime... Never*, published in 1939 and illustrated with thirty-six graphite drawings. She travelled widely, lived for eight years in Chapel Hill, North Carolina and finally settled in a house she designed herself in Woodbury, Connecticut. She continued to illustrate and write books, often with American themes; her final summation was *Growing New Roots*, with fourteen wood engravings, done for the Book Club of California in 1976. She died in Connecticut in 1989, loved and admired on both sides of the Atlantic.

REYNOLDS STONE (1909-79) was born at Eton, where his father was a housemaster, and christened Reynolds after Sir Joshua, from whom he was distantly descended. He attended Eton and Magdalene College, Cambridge, where he read history. After taking his degree in 1930 he was unofficially apprenticed to Walter Lewis, the University printer, and learned to compose type and work a press. Directly influenced by the work of Thomas Bewick and Gwen Raverat, he began at this time to teach himself wood engraving. In 1932 he happened to sit in the same train compartment as Eric Gill, after having purchased four sheets of reproductions of Gill's lettering. This incident led to his spending two weeks at Pigotts, where he met David Jones and René Hague and derived

Reynolds Stone. The Other Side of the Alde, *by Kenneth Clark. Warren Editions, 1968*

Reynolds Stone. A Shepherd's Life, *by W.H. Hudson. Compton Press, 1977*

a source of lasting inspiration. Stone spent two years at Cambridge University Press and two years working for a small printer in Taunton. By then he was obtaining enough small engraving commissions to survive and commenced his free-lance career.

His first book illustrations were ten small vignettes commissioned by Walter Lewis for a reissue of the 1719 *A Butler's Receipt Book* in 1935. In 1938 he illustrated *The Praise and Happiness of the Countrie-Life,* a seventeenth century text, for the Gregynog Press. These charming small engravings presaged his most typical illustrative work, idyllic rural scenes for texts which describe the countryside. If the wood engraving is ideal for rural illustration, and it has been extensively used for that purpose, Stone was one of the grand masters of the genre. At the same time he was producing very distinctive high quality lettering, mostly in the form of bookplates and labels.

A departure from ruralism was a commission from the Golden Cockerel Press to illustrate Swinburne's *Lucretia Borgia.* The text was set in 1940 in 16 point Poliphilus type from an earlier printed version, but the original manuscript was discovered before it went to press and so many additions were required it had to be reset in 14 point. Unfortunately Stone had engraved his headpiece illustrations for the original measure and the reset page was slightly narrower. Thus they look somewhat top-heavy. The images are handsome but perhaps a little stiff. The writer of the Chronicle (illustrated

on the page displayed) is rather stark but is surrounded by delightful leafy vines and is watched by two (no doubt golden) cockerels.

Kenneth Clark was a close friend of Reynolds Stone and a great admirer, so it seemed only natural that when he published the second edition of the nostalgic memoir of his early youth, *The Other Side of the Alde* in 1968, Stone should illustrate it. The panorama of field and sky evokes the mood of the text, as do the three other engravings, but the 'booklet', as he called it, is a complete Stone production. It was designed by him to display his new type-face, Janet 18 point, and was the first publication of Warren Editions, a venture of Jonathan and Phillida Gili, Stone's daughter and son-in-law. The colophon also records that Stone was one of the printers and the copy on display (one of one hundred twenty-five) is a presentation copy from him.

Boxwood (1957) turns the tables on the normal relationship between author and artist. Its full title is *Boxwood; Sixteen Engravings by Reynolds Stone, Illustrated in Verse by Sylvia Townsend Warner* and it was published by The Monotype Corporation to be the first display of their version of Giovanni Mardersteig's Dante type. It also has a foreword by Beatrice Warde in which she characterizes each engraving as

> a small and masterly graphic exploration of a theme — a statement in light and shade, a pictorial meditation within a rectangle.

The image of a hillside in winter (displayed) catches the bleakness of the season, white on grey, and the poem perfectly echoes the scene: 'Sadder and shabbier as the year ran out.' This is Reynolds Stone at his very best.

W.H. Hudson's *A Shepherd's Life* was first published in 1910. It is a fictionalized account of life in a small Wiltshire village, based on conversations Hudson had with a real shepherd over a number of years, which delves into a vanished rural past. In 1952 Stone moved to Litton Cheney in Dorset and spent the rest of his life in a Georgian rectory surrounded by trees and the open unspoiled countryside. His appreciation for nature was palpable and is well displayed in his last book, *A Shepherd's Life*, published in a limited edition of one hundred copies in 1977. Hudson's shepherd talked to him about foxes, and particularly the conflict between fox-hunters and pheasant-breeders, and this scene is conveyed by Stone with a fox warily skirting a cottage while a tiny pheasant rises from the bushes (displayed). Again the marriage of text and image seems just right.

Stone records that in 1939 he taught himself to cut letters in stone, following the example of Gill, and his inscriptions obviously influenced his lettering. In 1974 he provided an engraved 'decoration' for the wrapper of John Sparrow's collection of poems called *Grave Epigrams* and Sparrow surely had him in mind when writing Epigram X

'Upon STONE, an Engraver
A stone above and Stone below—
Meet it was to shroud him so;
Fitting too that he should have
Grave words graven on his grave
Here this precious Stone shall stay
Till on Resurrection Day
Angels roll the stone away.'

CASE 4

John Nash and Paul Nash

HE NASH BROTHERS are inevitably bracketed together in most discussions of twentieth century British graphic art, but because Paul, the elder, is considered to have been a more important painter, and indeed a major influence of twentieth century art, John's work is often thought to suffer by comparison. As book illustrators both are important; both worked imaginatively with different media and both had an abiding interest in natural history and the countryside.

JOHN NASH (1893-1977) illustrated books throughout his whole career, though he thought of it as a sideline to his painting. He was educated at Wellington College but received no formal art training at all and his artistic development was a direct result of collaborations with Paul before World War I. During the War he joined the Artists' Rifles and became, in 1918, an Official War Artist. His first illustrated book, *Dressing Gowns and Glue* by Lance Sieveking, appeared in 1919 with fourteen comic drawings reproduced from line blocks.

Nash had taught himself wood engraving and became a founder member of the Society of Wood Engravers in 1920. The Golden Cockerel Press published ten of his wood engravings in Swift's *Direction to Servants* in 1925 but his most important book of the twenties, and his wood engraved masterpiece, appeared in 1927. This was *Poisonous Plants: Deadly, Dangerous and Suspect* for which he provided twenty full-page illustrations as well as an introduction. The publishers, Frederick Etchells and Hugh Macdonald, engaged the Curwen Press as printer and the result of their careful press work with a large-size Walbaum type and electrotypes of the wood engravings on cream coloured hand-made paper was a large handsome volume which many consider one of the finest private press books issued between the wars. John Nash was a keen gardener and a considerable amateur botanist and he obviously chose the plants, in part, for their

John Nash. Poisonous Plants. *Etchells & MacDonald, 1927*

dramatic effect. His engravings were able to depict this through the interplay of black and white, ranging from the glossy deep tones of 'Spurge Laurel' to the delicate lacy white-line effect of 'Hemlock' (displayed). His method of engraving involved making a detailed drawing of the subject exactly the size of the block, showing the image as it would print, and working directly from that. As he remarked in a 1928 article, 'Engraving demands a tight control and respectful deliberation.'

Nash was twice given the opportunity to illustrate one of his favourite books. *The Natural History of Selborne*, by Gilbert White, has been illustrated many times in the twentieth century but seldom by an artist who combined an instinctive feeling for the text with an ability to draw birds, animals and flowers with Nash's skill. He could also appreciate and reproduce White's touches of humour. The Lutterworth Press, which commissioned the eleven full-page and nineteen smaller line drawings, could not afford to be very expansive in 1951. It is thus a small book with a cramped text and Nash's drawings are reproduced only in black-and-white and considerably reduced from their original size. His illustrations were often very specific and he obviously closely observed the country around Selborne. For interior scenes he interpreted the text literally but imaginatively: for instance the scene 'Some ladies ... took a fancy to a toad' (displayed) illustrates White's story of a pet toad raised to a monstrous size by being fed maggots at table until its eye was put out by a raven and it languished and died. In Nash's drawing the toad and its single eye dominate the scene while the diners observe it with interest, being, in White's phrase 'ladies you will say of peculiar taste.' Nash grudgingly admitted that the drawings looked 'pretty well'.

His second opportunity to illustrate *The Natural History of Selborne* came twenty years later when he was commissioned by the Limited Editions Club. This time there were no constraints. The format was large enough to reproduce the drawings almost full-size, there was good paper, and the text was generously spaced. The number of full-page illustrations was increased to sixteen and they were lithographed in four colours after Nash's handcoloured proofs. The book was designed by John Lewis, printed by W.S. Cowell, and all fifteen hundred copies were signed by Nash. The coloured toad is not only more resplendent but more threatening and the whole scene is much livelier. It appeared in the autumn of 1972 and Nash was obviously pleased with it.

A very different view of John Nash as an illustrator is provided by *Happy New Lear* of 1957, one of a series of annual illustrated booklets published by Guinness to promote its primary product. Although he had to work according to the specifications of Guinness and with a text which consisted of limericks by Stanley Penn, Nash was able to indulge in his natural sense of fun and the result was lively, light and very witty. It was also printed by Cowell to their usual high standard.

PAUL NASH (1889-1946), although more often discussed as a painter, made book illustration and decoration an important part of his career, from his first bookplate in 1908 to the posthumous *Aerial Flowers* of 1947. He was born in 1889 and attended St. Paul's School, the Chelsea Polytechnic, Bolt Court, and the Slade School. His first one-man exhibition was held in 1912. During World War I he belonged to the Artists' Rifles and, like his brother, was made an Official War Artist. The War changed him from a romantic artist to a harsh realist whose powerful landscapes illustrate the horror of the trenches.

Nash's first published book illustrations were ten line blocks done for John Drinkwater's *Loyalties* in 1918. In 1919 he taught himself wood engraving which he used extensively for book work. For Oxford University Press he did five wood engravings, the first to be published as book illustrations, in 1921, for Drinkwater's *Cotswold Characters*. His technique, as in the figure 'Thesiger Crowne, The Mason' (displayed), was similar to that of John Nash; a detailed ink drawing exactly the size of the block from which the engraving was copied. Drinkwater's text described 'characters' and Nash's illustrations picked up the eccentricities. Thesiger Crowne was described by Drinkwater as:

> He looked very handsome this evening. He had a stout frame, tall, and he was rather a dandy, with the dandy's proper respect for natural tradition.

Nash's engraving captured all these characteristics.

Genesis (1924) was a key work in Nash's artistic career because it demonstrated that he could raise the art of wood engraving to a new level that was not wholly representational and he encountered, for the first time, the superb craftsmanship of the Curwen Press. Francis Meynell, the proprietor of the Nonesuch Press, had commissioned the engravings and decided that they should be matched with Rudolph Koch's Neuland

Paul Nash. Genesis. *Nonesuch Press, 1924*

type, a very heavy face used in England for the first time in this book. The twelve engravings, viewed together and in sequence constitute one of the most unified of illustrated books. Beginning with 'The Void', a solid black rectangle with just a hint of light on two of its edges, the series progresses through the six days of creation, each image admitting more light and allowing more shapes to form; 'The Division of the Light from the Darkness' (displayed) the end of the first day, shows shafts of light refracted across the black water, which Nash viewed, in his geometrical terminology, as 'prism straight intersections.' Three hundred seventy-five copies were published

and proved popular with critics and the public. It is perhaps the most striking of all Nonesuch Press books.

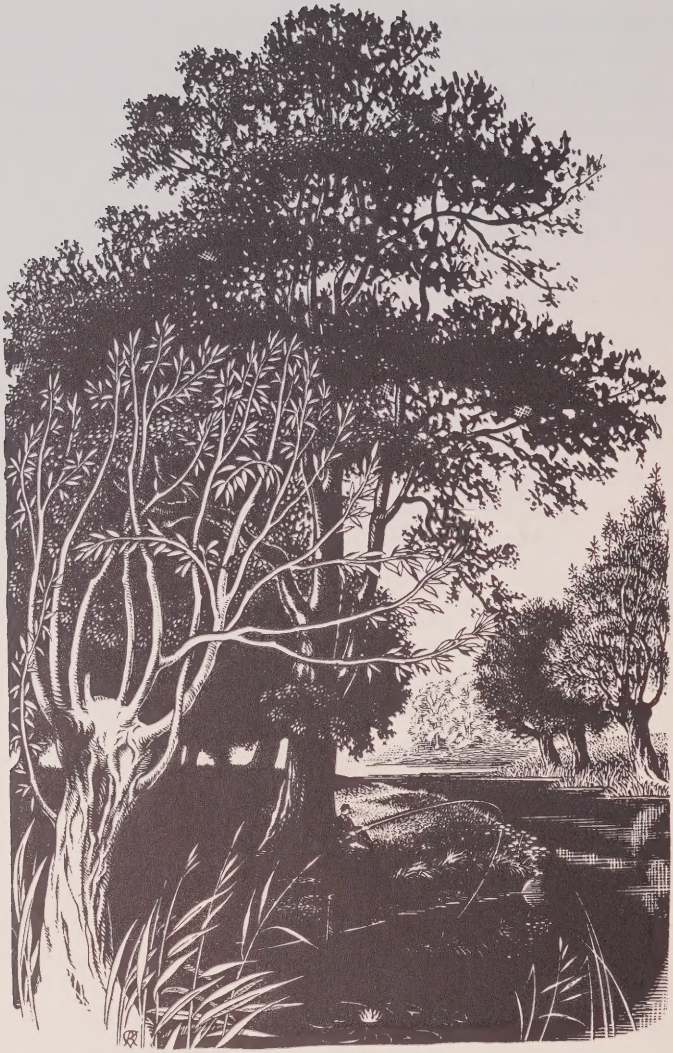
Paul Nash participated in another triumph of modern book making in 1932 with his illustrations for Sir Thomas Browne's *Urne Buriall and The Garden of Cyrus.* This production of the Curwen Press for Cassell and Company has been called 'one of the loveliest achievements of contemporary English art' (Herbert Read) and is one of the strong nominees for the most beautiful book of the twentieth century. Nash's fifteen full-page and seventeen half-page illustrations were first printed in collotype by Whittingham and Griggs and then hand-stencilled with colours using the *pochoir* process developed by Harold Curwen. Nash had first made drawings in pencil and crayon and then in chalk and was able to personally participate in every detail of the production. The text of *The Garden of Cyrus* was ideal for Nash, as it analysed the occurrence of the quincunx in nature, that is the lozenge pattern that provides a geometrical order. As he had come to view nature in geometrical terms anyway, his reading of the text was sympathetic and insightful. The opening of *The Garden of Cyrus* (displayed) shows to advantage all the features of the book. The title is set in a large size of Bruce Rogers's Centaur type, the text type is Bembo, and the Greek notes are set in New Hellenic, designed by Victor Scholderer. Nash's facing illustration displays the Garden, with its 'first ornamental Scene of nature', in perfect balance and harmony. This book must be considered as a major landmark in Nash's career, the imagery of which provided him with inspiration for the rest of his career.

Most twentieth century graphic artists designed book jackets and both John and Paul Nash did several. Among the most visually impressive of John's was the jacket for Adrian Bell's *Men and the Fields* (1939), a book he also illustrated. It is a lithograph of a tri-partite farming scene in an area very familiar to Nash, on the Essex-Suffolk border, and he is quite precise in his delineation. The horse-drawn plough on the spine is surrounded by the tractor drawing a spring-tooth harrow (the new technology) and a montage of the fields in different seasons. It represents a kind of visual summary of the book.

A striking example of a Paul Nash jacket is that done for Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero* (1929). It was done at Aldington's suggestion and he even specified which passage in the book should be used as the basis of the design. Nash found it impossible

to illustrate that passage and provided a much more generalized image in his familiar geometrical style. After much wrangling with the printer, the lithograph was finally completed and both Aldington and the publisher, Chatto & Windus, expressed themselves pleased with the most striking result.

Paul Nash. Cotswold Characters, *by John Drinkwater. Yale University Press, 1921*



Reginald Knowles. My River, *by Wilfred Gavin Brown. Muller, 1947*

CASE 5

The Knowles Family and the Robinson Family

N THE 1890s, publisher Joseph Dent, having a strong sympathy with the ideas and ideals behind the Arts and Crafts movement, became interested in the private press work of William Morris and T. J. Cobden-Sanderson. He published an edition of *Le morte d'Arthur* in 1893, illustrated by the young artist Aubrey Beardsley. This book was inspired by and intended to compete with the Kelmscott Press books of Morris, but was published for a larger audience using mass-production methods. A few years later, when Dent was considering the publication of the first books in the 'Everyman Library', he hired Reginald Knowles, another young artist, to design the distinctive title-pages and other decorations, which were clearly derived from Morris, Beardsley and Housman.

REGINALD LIONEL KNOWLES (1879-1950) was born in Poplar in East London. He was the second son of Ebenezer Caleb Knowles and Emma Dece Scutt. The father, a native of Worcestershire, was the author of several books of verse and a play, and an accomplished musician, having been presented at one concert to Emperor Napoleon III. He moved to London as a young man and married Emma, who was a teacher in an infants' school in Poplar. They had four children besides Reginald: Charles Francis (1876-1936), who became an artist and writer; Marion Charlotte (who died in infancy); Hubert George (1882-1949); and Horace John (1884-1954), also an artist.

There seems to be little published information about Reginald Knowles. A boyhood friend in Poplar, Mr. G. N. Kent (whose reminiscences are in the local archives at the Central Library of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets), wrote that

> Reginald Knowles was a friend of mine. He was a delicate little boy, a hunchback... Reg produced a monthly magazine — it was a slender quarto, done entirely by hand, Reg's hand, beautifully lettered and illustrated by his little pictures.

Along with his brothers Charles and Horace, Reginald attended the Craft School in Aldgate, and when he left school, probably shortly before 1900, began working as an artist for Dent.

His first important job was to design the title-pages, endpapers and spines of the books in the 'Everyman Library'. Dent planned to build the most complete library for the common man that the world had ever seen, at a price the new literary public, created by the recent Education Acts, could afford. The first volumes were published in 1906 and within one year one hundred fifty-five volumes were in print and a million and a half copies had been sold. When Dent died in 1926, seven hundred fifty-five volumes had been published and over twenty million sold. Knowles drew the endpapers to each volume, printed in pale green, which show the draped figure of Good Deeds, the sister of Knowledge, facing a scroll of the latter's address to Everyman — 'Everyman, I will go with thee and be thy guide, In thy most need to go by thy side'. The thirteen subject sections of the Library are distinguished by the colour of the cloth binding and by the designs on the title-page with their elaborate floral borders. The flat spines of the bindings are decorated with a trellis of winding flowers and the titles are done in hand-drawn letters.

Books in the 'Everyman Library' are of course still being published today, though their appearance has changed quite drastically. Knowles's designs were used for the thirty years until 1935, when the hand-drawn lettering on the title-page was replaced by type set in Eric Gill's Perpetua Roman face, and the elaborate art nouveau decorations were replaced by a series of small abstract designs by Eric Ravilious.

Knowles did many other designs for Dent during his long career as the publisher's house artist. In 1983 Martin Dent, then the current Chairman of the Board at J. M. Dent & Sons, provided information about the work Knowles had done for the firm. In fact, Martin Dent had commissioned practically everything from the late 1920s until Knowles's death, including drawn title-pages and spines for a great many of its general publications. His most easily recognizable work, apart from the 'Everyman Library', can be found in the commercial bindings he designed for Dent and for other publishers like George Newnes, Jarrolds, Cassell, and George Allen, with their sumptuous gold-blocked, highly decorated front boards. A tiny 'RK' or 'RLK' can be found on most of his designs which confirms the work as his.

Knowles also worked as an illustrator, sometimes in colour but mostly in black and white. His *Old-World Love Stories* (Dent, 1913), for example, has many coloured plates and other decorations, and is bound in a rather extravagent pink cover (displayed). Other books he illustrated include *The Happy Isles* (Dent, 1938), *The Round of the Year* (Muller, 1945) and *My River* (Muller, 1947). Many of his illustrations are too static, but those he did for *My River* are quite effective, though some appear inspired by the wood engravings in Robert Gibbings's 'river books'.

HORACE KNOWLES (1884-1954) was first apprenticed as an engineering draughtsman, but he managed to find time in the evenings to produce illustrations with his brother Reginald for *Legends from Fairyland* (Freemantle, 1907) and *Norse Tales* (Freemantle, 1910). He became a full-time freelance artist some time later, his first commissions being to produce illuminated addresses on vellum and to illustrate several church magazines. He went on to illustrate over twenty books, mostly in pen and ink, producing some very delicate, decorative drawings, often of scenes of the countryside. Perhaps his finest

Horace Knowles. The Months, *by Leigh Hunt. Nicholson and Watson, 1936*

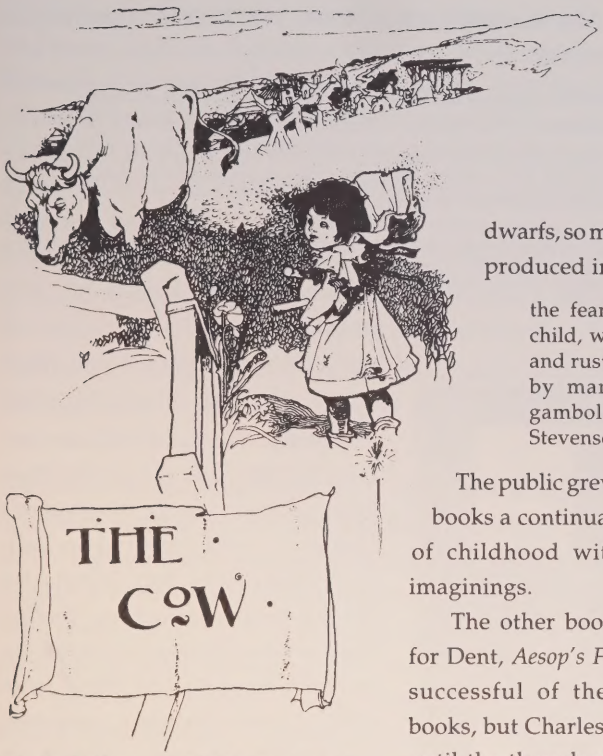
work may be seen in Leigh Hunt's *The Months* (1936), where each month of the year has a full-page pen drawing and a delicately drawn page heading ('March' is displayed). The initial letters, printed in green, are the final lovely touches to a most attractive book. The last major task of his career, which he worked on for five years, was to produce some five hundred illustrations and maps for the Bible published to commemorate the third jubilee of the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1954.

DESPITE THE FACT that Reginald Knowles made an important contribution to the concept of producing good looking, carefully made and yet inexpensive books for a mass audience, the Knowles brothers must be considered in the second rank of book illustrators. The Robinson brothers — Thomas Heath, Charles, and William Heath — on the other hand, deserve no such slight praise. Of the three brothers, there is no doubt that Charles and William are major figures among twentieth century British illustrators.

CHARLES ROBINSON (1870-1937) had little formal art training. His time as a student at the Royal Academy Schools was cut short through lack of funds, and he went on to be apprenticed as a lithographic artist to Waterlow and Sons. He continued to work as an artist, however, and was rewarded in 1895 by an article in the May issue of *The Studio*, praising his strongly personal style. He secured two commissions from leading publishers of illustrated books at that time, Joseph Dent and John Lane. *A Child's Garden of Verses* (Lane, 1895) was an overwhelming success, and *The Studio* commented, no doubt pleased at the success of its protegé,

> The artist has acquitted himself magnificently of his task, and we take especial pleasure in recording his success. Everyone who likes prettily decorated books should buy this little work.

Clearly this advice was taken by many readers, for, on the royalties on this book and the prospects suggested for the future from its general acclaim, Charles Robinson was able to marry in 1897. He went on to illustrate more than one hundred books, the majority of which were for children. As we can recognize Kate Greenaway's illustrations by their young girls and aesthetic ladies and Arthur Rackham's by his elves and



Charles Robinson. A Child's Garden of Verses, *by R.L. Stevenson. John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1895*

dwarfs, so many of the illustrations Charles produced include, as De Freitas writes,

> the fearless Charles Robinson child, with his thick wavy hair and rustic clothes, encountered by many for the first time gambolling his way through Stevenson's poems.

The public grew to expect to find in Charles's books a continuation of his graphic evocation of childhood with its fantastic and heroic imaginings.

The other book Charles illustrated in 1895 for Dent, *Aesop's Fables* , was perhaps the most successful of the Banbury Cross series of books, but Charles did not work for Dent again until the three brothers collaborated on a new edition of Hans Andersen's *Fairy Tales* in 1899. Frank Swinnerton, who worked in Dent's outer office at the time, has written of the three brothers that they

> used to swing into Dent's shop ... like the three musketeers. My memory is of Tom, rather small and sedate, first; Will, very thin and taller than the others, in an overcoat which was so closely buttoned that he looked thinner than ever, in the middle; and Charles, always freer and more jaunty in his movements than the others, last. They would stand talking to me while they waited until Mr. Dent could see them, and then they filed upstairs. What happened then I don't know; but soon afterwards they would come clattering down again like schoolboys, always very much amused at what had happened above.

The 1899 Andersen *Fairy Tales* was the first book which William had illustrated for Dent and one critic has written that

> although William was the youngest of the three brothers, his drawings include the really outstanding images in the book ... the best of William's drawings strike a perfect balance between illustration and decoration, illuminating the essential idea underlying the text, rather than, as is so commonly the case, merely picturing an incident described in passing.

Charles was responsible for the overall appearance of the volume as well as contributing a number of attractive, decorative illustrations.

Thomas Heath Robinson. Fairy Tales from Hans Christian Andersen. *Dent [1899]*

THOMAS HEATH ROBINSON (1869-1953), the eldest brother, had one year earlier illustrated William Canton's *A Child's Book of Saints* for Dent (later to appear in the 'Everyman's Library'), with twenty-two full-page illustrations and designs for the title-page and binding. His first illustrations appeared in book form in Frank Rinder's *Old World Japan* (1895). Thomas became a competent and prolific illustrator, though his work does not have the flair for fantasy and decoration shown by his brothers, to say nothing of William's comic sense.

All three brothers did other work for Dent, including a second version of *Don Quixote* (1902) by William, following the less successful Bliss, Sands edition of 1897. There were of

course many other books with other publishers, notably two splendidly imaginative and funny books for children, written and illustrated by William — *Uncle Lubin* (Grant Richards, 1902) and *Bill the Minder* (Constable, 1912); Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (Grant Richards, 1904) *Twelfth Night* (Hodder, 1908), another edition of Andersen (Constable, 1913), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Constable, 1914), Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1915), all illustrated by William; *The Big Book of Fairy Tales* (Blackie, 1911), Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Sensitive Plant* (Heinemann, 1911), Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince* (Duckworth, 1913) and *The Songs and Sonnets of William Shakespeare* (Duckworth, 1915), illustrated by Charles. Charles Robinson's style was very decorative, with flowing scenes often surrounded by elaborate borders. Though his work was inspired partly by the pre-Raphaelites and by Japanese prints, he was an original artist, particularly in his depiction of fantasy and in his colouring.

WILLIAM HEATH ROBINSON (1872-1944) was however a more versatile artist than either of his brothers. His black and white drawings in particular are highly accomplished: their design is always interesting, and they display a delicate sense of line together with a bold decorative use of solid blacks and whites. His drawings for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example, have been called 'pen paintings'.

Decorativeness and design, fine draughtsmanship, seriousness, humour and absurdity — all these features may be seen in William's work. As well as illustrating books, he turned to making cartoons and depicting the sort of comic contraptions which are now called by his name. These contraptions are usually very complicated, but they exist for a very simple purpose, such as counting peas or freezing a herring. Small, serious men control levers or work windlasses at vital points, often sitting on ricketty ladders, and the wheels are not quite round and pulleys consist of lengths of string knotted together. Many of these drawings appeared in magazines such as the *Sketch* or the *Bystander* or the *London Magazine*. After the outbreak of war in 1914, most of his illustrations were of this type and books of cartoons appeared with such titles as *Hunlikely* (1915) and *Railway Ribaldry* (1935).

William also illustrated with his comic drawings many advertising and publicity leaflets. He wrote in 1938 ,

> Advertising, I am told, is a serious science, and I have no doubt it is, but to me as an illustrator it has always been great fun.

He worked for many companies, including leather processors, excavating machinery firms, harbour authorities and men's outfitters. *Behind the Scenes at Moss Bros* is a typical leaflet which advertises a serious product by using absurdly comic drawings. William also worked for the City Dairy Company in Toronto, and the Fisher Library has been fortunate in acquiring recently one of its rare booklets illustrated by the artist.

It is perhaps not possible to divide William's work into two categories, the serious and the comic, for his serious illustrations usually contain much wit and humour, while his comic drawings show solemn men attempting to solve real problems in a ludicrous manner. All his work illustrates the compassion of the artist himself:

> His humour might be able to raise a laugh at the ordinary man, at his foibles and difficulties, but it is a brother's laugh in which he could join.

Left: William Heath Robinson. Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales. *New York: Holt, 1913*
Opposite page: William Heath Robinson. A Midsummer Night's Dream, *by William Shakespeare. Constable, 1914*

ACT IV

Edward Bawden. London Is London, *compiled by D.M. Low. Chatto & Windus, 1949*

CASE 6

Edward McKnight Kauffer and Edward Bawden

DWARD MCKNIGHT KAUFFER (1890-1954) was born in Montana, USA, and maintained his American citizenship throughout his life. He is nevertheless regarded as a British artist and illustrator, for the major portion of his artistic career was spent in England. After studying at the Art Institute of Chicago (1912-13), he went to Europe, spending six months in Munich and a year in Paris. There he met and married Grace Ehrlich, a gifted American concert pianist. In 1914 they moved to England, first to Durham and then to London, where he worked as an advertising artist, producing among other things some brilliantly coloured lithographed labels for use on cotton bales. He was a painter also, establishing Group X in 1919 with Wyndham Lewis, to give focus to London's avant-garde artists, but it was for his posters, especially those he designed for London Transport and Shell, that he achieved lasting fame. He did all sorts of other commercial work — book jackets, brochures, theatre and exhibition design, and designs for textiles and furnishings — before he turned his attention to book illustration.

He went to New York in 1921, expecting to establish himself in the United States as a designer, but failed and returned to England where he was almost a national figure. He revisited Paris in 1923 and renewed his acquaintance with Marion Dorn, an interior designer from California. They returned to London and lived together until Kauffer's death, working together on various design projects, including a joint exhibition of rugs made to their designs at the Arthur Tooth Gallery in 1929. In 1925 Kauffer illustrated his first book (Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, published by the Nonesuch Press in two volumes), and illustrated ten more in the next six years. At the beginning of the Second World War, Kauffer returned to New York, where he continued to do some work, designing actively for Pan American and American Airlines (1948-54). He also designed numerous book jackets for the 'Modern Library', Alfred Knopf, and other American publishers. Despite these successes, he became increasingly depressed by a feeling of

failure and, disillusioned with the whole New York advertising scene, started drinking heavily and died in 1954.

Frank Pick, the Publicity Manager of the London Underground Electric Railways (later London Transport) gave Kauffer his first commission as a poster artist. The four which appeared in 1915 are essentially gouache landscapes of the countryside around London. This early work shows the influence of Van Gogh and of Japanese woodcut artists, but soon his posters showed his interest in avant-garde art.

These early posters launched Kauffer on an exceedingly successful career as a poster artist and he worked for many companies, though his best work was done for London Transport and Shell. A reprint of one of the better known of these, 'Winter sales are best reached by Underground', printed by Vincent Brooks Day in 1921, is on display in the MacLean Hunter Reading Room.

E. McKnight Kauffer. Journey of the Magi, *by T.S. Eliot. Faber & Gywer, 1927*

Kauffer continued to work for London Transport, and designed posters for the Orient Line, the General Post Office and the Empire Marketing Board. The series of posters he did for Shell for the sides and rear of trucks ('lorry bills' as the English called them) rank as one of the artist's major achievements. A poster from the initial print run is on display in the Reading Room — 'See Britain first on winter Shell: The New Forest', printed by SCA & Co. in 1931. Kauffer was the beneficiary of the first-class printing skills available at such printers as the Baynard Press, Vincent Brooks Day, Dangerfield and Waterlow for his posters. Strangely the Curwen Press produced only one of his posters even though it printed his magnificent stencilled book illustrations.

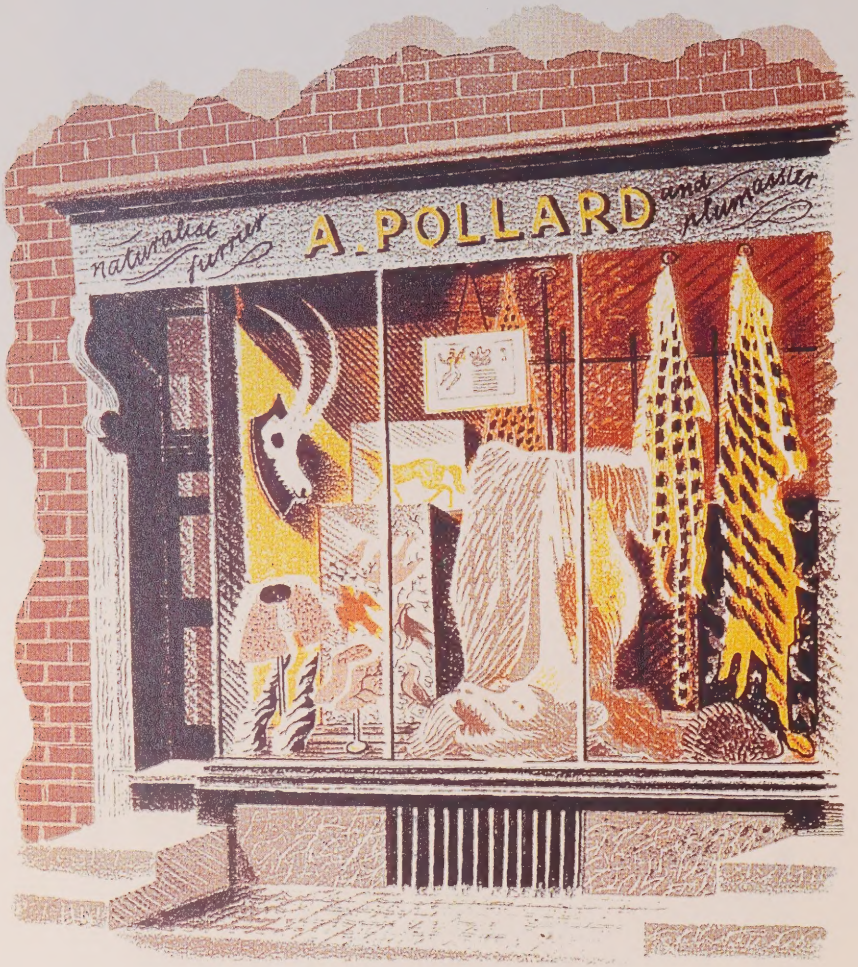
William Nicholson. Twelve Portraits. *Heinemann, 1899*

John Nash. The Natural History of Selborne, *by Gilbert White. Limited Editions Club, 1972*

Charles Robinson. The Happy Prince and Other Tales, *by Oscar Wilde. Duckworth, 1913*

Edward McKnight Kauffer. Elsie and the Child, *by Arnold Bennett. Cassell, 1929*

Edward Bawden. Adam and Evelyn at Kew, *by Robert Herring. Elkin Mathews & Marrot, 1930*



Eric Ravilious. High Street. *Country Life, 1938*

John O'Connor. A Pattern of People. *Hutchinson, 1959*

Edward Ardizzone. Tim and Ginger. *Oxford University Press, 1965 (from the original artwork)*

'Commercial art' is a term which for some implies the subordination of artistic integrity to the need for financial gain. Kauffer was an artist who brought all his skills and professionalism to every job he tackled, much as Harold Curwen had done when he took over the Curwen Press and brought good design and printing to the jobbing work the Press did. Artist and illustrator Paul Nash believed that Kauffer was

> responsible, above anyone else for the change in attitude towards commercial art in this country ... today we are able to regard drawing and designing for industry as a serious form of art. (*Signature*, 1935.)

After *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1925), Kauffer illustrated other books for the Nonesuch Press, and for Cassell, Etchells & Macdonald, and Faber. Most of these were printed at the Curwen Press and all the illustrations were produced there using the 'pochoir' stencilling technique. This stencil process had long been practised in France, but it had not been used on a commercial scale in England until Harold Curwen started it at the Curwen Press in 1925. Stencils were cut and colours blended to match the original illustration prepared by the artist. The stencils were then 'keyed' to the page and colour — gouache or watercolour — applied with a brush or sponge.

Curwen was very much a 'production' man, and he employed his customary efficiency to set up the Stencil Department. He organized the stencil cutting, found methods of mixing the colours in a consistent way, and trained a group of young women selected just for the job of applying the colour. The illustrations can be considered individual works of art compared to the printed copies which are used for most books, and the colours retain their charm and brilliance to this day. Colour stencilling had only a short life of some six years at the Curwen Press. It could only be used for fairly small editions, and when the Depression reached its lowest point in the early 1930s, sales of limited edition books almost disappeared. Added to this was the fact that many of the stencillers married or moved out of the business for some other reason.

Kauffer used watercolour for the gentler illustrations he did for Melville's *Benito Cereno* (Nonesuch Press, 1926), which the artist conceived as drawings with added colour. Desmond Flower states that the frontispiece to this book is

> one of the most brilliant designs [Kauffer] ever conceived; with pen and two tints — grey and mauve — he built up a shimmering design of a ship becalmed at last light which has an intricate beauty of which the eye can never tire.

Kauffer used gouache for two books he illustrated in 1929, Arnold Bennett's *Elsie and the Child* (Nonesuch Press) and *Robinson Crusoe* (Etchells & Macdonald), and the results are amazingly bright and fresh. The blues in the Defoe are extemely intense, but as a whole the book lacks homogeneity because the text (printed by Robert Maclehose) fails to integrate with the Curwen illustrations. The Bennett book, printed entirely by Curwen, has gouache illustrations of unparalleled richness, and what completes this book to perfection is the Baskerville type in which a running heading, encased in beige rules, carries the reader through the book, picking up colour echoes in many of the illustrations. The opening text page shows the perfect balance achieved between the text and the illustration, brought about by the collaboration of artist Kauffer and printer Oliver Simon.

EDWARD BAWDEN (1903-89) was another major illustrator who dabbled in the 'pochoir' process (the shown example of this work is from *The Curwen Miscellany*, published in 1931), though his work is normally done in other media — wood engraving, linocut, pen drawing or lithograph. Like Kauffer, he was also an important poster artist.

Bawden was born in Essex in 1903 and studied at the Cambridge School of Art and the Royal College of Art. Paul Nash was one of his teachers at the RCA, and his fellow students included Eric Ravilious and Douglas Percy Bliss, the three of whom became close friends. In 1925, while still at the RCA, Bawden was commissioned by Harold Curwen to do some illustrations for a booklet on pottery making, and soon both Bawden and Ravilious were designing patterned paper, borders and fleurons for the Curwen Press. In 1928 Bawden illustrated one of the 'Ariel Poems', *Popular Song* by Edith Sitwell, and Robert Paltock's *The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins*, published by Dent with its seventeen drawings hand-coloured in France. Other books followed, including *Adam and Evelyn at Kew* (1930), *Travellers' Verse* (1946), *Gulliver's Travels* (1948), a limited edition of William Blake's *Tyger, Tyger!*, published by the Taurus Press in 1974, with linocuts by Bawden and Peter Piech, and many others, concluding with Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* done for the Folio Society in 1987.

After his initial encouragement of Bawden as a young artist, Curwen became his friend, sponsor and teacher. In the 1930s, Curwen was encouraging Bawden to draw

directly on the stone, and even as late as the 1940s, Bawden was seeking his advice about which colour to print first. *The Arabs*, illustrated by Bawden for the Puffin Picture Books series (1947), is the direct result of this consultation.

The War interrupted the peaceful life of Bawden and his family who for many years lived at Great Bardfield in rural Essex. Bawden became an Official War Artist and, after escaping from Dunkirk, he was sent on several expeditions to the Middle East and Africa. He spent five days adrift in a lifeboat after his ship was torpedoed off Lagos, was interned for two months in Casablanca and then spent some time in Italy with Edward Ardizzone. Bawden later claimed that the years spent overseas deepened his emotional range as an artist, and that this was the time when he felt that he really learned to draw.

Bawden had a remarkable feeling for design, and in his best work, his illustrations decorate the page in a typographical as well as a pictorial way. He had an instinct for picking out essential attributes and recording them with relish. He was a painter also and the comments of a reviewer (in the 24 April 1987 issue of the *Times Literary Supplement*) on the 1987 exhibition of his watercolours apply equally to his illustrations:

> Bawden ... is very English in his liking for the frank and unpretentious, for fresh observation, sound draughtsmanship and quiet humour.

He painted murals, designed ceramic tiles, produced linocut prints, and did much commercial work for companies such as Fortnum and Mason, Imperial Airways, and the Midland Bank. Like Kauffer, he also designed a number of posters for London Transport. All his work showed his enjoyment of life: his friend Bliss wrote that Bawden 'saw life like a foreigner at a cricket match, marvelling at its madness.'

Bawden received many honours during his lifetime. He won the Francis Williams Book Illustration Award for 1977 and 1982, and he was made a CBE in 1946, Royal Academician (1956) and Royal Designer to Industry (1979). He died on 21 November 1989.

Eric Ravilious. The Atrocities of the Pirates, *by Aaron Smith. Golden Cockerel Press, 1929*

CASE 7

Eric Ravilious, John Farleigh and John O'Connor

RIC RAVILIOUS (1903-42) was one of those artists who were nurtured by Harold Curwen and Oliver Simon of the Curwen Press at various periods of his career. He was born in London and studied at the Royal College of Art (1922-25), where his teachers included Paul Nash. His fellow students were a remarkably talented group and included Edward Bawden, Douglas Bliss, Barnett Freedman and Henry Moore. In 1925 he began teaching part-time at the Eastbourne School of Art, and in October of that year, was elected to the Society of Wood Engravers, having been proposed by Nash.

Ravilious was among the foremost of English artists to flourish in the period between the two wars, and he became a true master of the art of wood engraving. His body of work was wide-ranging and multi-faceted, and, in his relatively short life, he produced watercolours, murals, posters, pottery designs for Wedgwood and even some pieces of furniture. Soon after leaving the RCA, he began illustrating books, and produced engraved vignettes and borders as well as patterned paper for the Curwen Press. His relationship with Edward Bawden, another Curwen Press protegé, grew very close. In 1928 he collaborated with Bawden on murals at Morley College, and in 1930 he and his wife, Tirzah Garwood, and the Bawdens moved into Brick House in Great Bardfield in the Essex country-side. This was the beginning of a most fruitful time for both Bawden and Ravilious, and the house and garden and the surrounding landscapes are often seen in their work. In 1933 they both had one-man shows of their paintings at the Zwemmer Gallery in London, and Ravilious had a second show in 1936. The Raviliouses moved to Castle Hedingham, just ten miles from the Bawdens, in 1934, and lived there until 1941.

Ravilious painted some lovely watercolours of the English landscape and also did many as a war artist during the Second World War. He was, however, first and foremost a wood engraver, and he produced many illustrations in this medium. His first

wood engraved illustrations were for Martin Armstrong's *Desert* (Cape, 1926), and for two books published by the Golden Cockerel Press, Sir John Suckling's *A Ballad upon a Wedding* (1927), and Nicholas Breton's *The Twelve Moneths* (1928). The artist was disappointed when he saw that, in places, his fine lines in *Desert* had lost their definition. He worked on his techniques to ensure that his wood engravings could be well printed on a modern press, though the illustrations for the first Golden Cockerel Press books are still too finely cut for the paper. These books were quickly followed by others for private and commercial publishers, including commissions to illustrate L.A.G. Strong's *The Hansom Cab and the Pigeons* (Golden Cockerel Press, 1935) and Gilbert White's *The Natural History of Selborne* (Nonesuch Press, 1938).

One major book was illustrated with lithographs, J.M. Richards's *High Street* (Country Life, 1938). For this work, Ravilious went back to the Curwen Press and drew on lithographic plates his illustrations for twenty-four shops, based on sketches made on the spot. Each illustration was printed in four colours and there had to be a plate for each colour. The artist had to work out the colour separations and draw what was needed on the plates themselves, and choose what colours he wanted. The twenty-four illustrations were divided into three groups of eight, with a different combination of four colours being used for each group. Helen Binyon writes that

> Eric used his medium so inventively, varying the proportions of the four colours on each plate, and altering their hue and tone by superimposing one on the other, that most people looking through the book would probably not realize that the number of actual colour printings was so limited.

Ravilious was appointed an Official War Artist in 1940 and painted submarine and other naval subjects at Gosport in Hampshire, and the cross-Channel bombardment. He was sent to Scotland with the Fleet Air Arm and then to Iceland in August, 1942. A few days later on September 2, he joined an air-sea rescue mission which failed to return.

JOHN FARLEIGH (1900-65) left school when he was fourteen years old and was apprenticed to the Artists Illustrators Agency in Balham, South London. After war service, he studied at the Central School of Arts and Crafts (1919-22) where one of his teachers was Noel Rooke. He taught art at Rugby School for three years, and then returned to the Central School where he taught for many years.

Farleigh painted landscapes and figure studies and murals, designed postage stamps, and like many of his contemporaries, designed posters for London Transport. He exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1937 and he had a number of one-man shows at London art galleries. Wood engraving, however, was the medium in which he excelled. He had been one of Rooke's early and more significant students, and Rooke introduced him to Robert Gibbings, the proprietor of the Golden Cockerel Press. He was commissioned by Gibbings to produce wood engravings for two volumes of Swift's *Selected Essays*: the first volume was published in 1925, but volume two was never undertaken because a thunderstorm destroyed half of the edition of four hundred copies of volume one.

The work by which Farleigh established his reputation was his wood engravings for Bernard Shaw's *The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God*, published by Constable in 1932. The book, which showed how a general publisher could produce something finely printed and designed, was a considerable popular success. The first printing was soon exhausted and five reprints followed in the next few months. Shaw had strong opinions about how his characters should appear in the illustrations, and although he wrote to Farleigh 'do not let me hamper or distract you', he insisted in sending his own rough drawings for the artist to consider, and passed on a stream of his critical comments on Farleigh's work. Despite the success of the book, Farleigh admits in his autobiographical textbook, *Graven Image*, that Shaw's ideas did restrict his options.

Farleigh became well known as an illustrator following publication of *The Adventures of the Black Girl*, even though he wrote that he had

> no original intention of becoming a book illustrator myself, and [do] not even to this day [consider] myself a professional.

He worked for many publishers, including private presses such as the Golden Cockerel Press and the Shakespeare Head Press, and for commercial publishers such as Dent,

John Farleigh. The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God, *by Bernard Shaw. Constable, 1932*

Constable and Heinemann. He worked closely with typographer J.H. Mason on D.H. Lawrence's *The Man Who Died* (Heinemann, 1935), and the result was a fine piece of book production. Farleigh's illustrations are printed in red and black, and in his words,

> the red ... was all I needed to give full reign to the subcurrent of intensity that Lawrence had got into the story. I made the red ebb and flow as the story sank into passivity or increased in intensity.

Farleigh used lithography for the illustrations for Sacheverel Sitwell's *Old Fashioned Flowers* (Country Life, 1939) and pen drawings for Christina Hole's *Haunted England* (Batsford, 1940). He illustrated other books by Shaw, showing clearly how satisfied the writer had been with *The Adventures of the Black Girl* (and Shaw himself actually paid Farleigh for those illustrations), including volumes in the collected 'Shaw' and *Back to Methuselah*, published by the Limited Editions Club of New York in 1939.

Farleigh was elected a member of the Society of Wood Engravers in 1925, and a fellow of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers and Engravers in 1948. For his work in founding the Crafts Centre of Great Britain, he was made CBE in 1949.

JOHN O'CONNOR (1913-) was born in Leicester, and studied first at the Leicester College of Art (1930-33) and then at the Royal College of Art in London (1933-37) where John Nash and Eric Ravilious were among his teachers. After further study of typography, Ravilious recommended him as a young artist with potential to Christopher Sandford, who had succeeded Robert Gibbings as proprietor of the Golden Cockerel Press.

O'Connor's first illustrated book was *Here's Flowers*, an anthology of flower poems compiled by Joan Rutter and published by the Golden Cockerel Press in 1937. For this O'Connor made eight wood engravings, even though he was serving in the Royal Air Force. His second Golden Cockerel Press book appeared in 1945, Christopher Whitfield's *Together and Alone*, followed quickly by Owen Rutter's *We Happy Few* in 1946. Sandford wrote in *Cockalorum*, the bibliography of the Press's books from 1943 to 1948, how 'Flying Officer' John O'Connor's ten engravings for *Together and Alone* were cut in a freezing Nissen hut in intervals between operational flights, and the eleven he

did for *We Happy Few*, an anthology of war poems, were 'all made in camp on active service, and came to me precariously by field post'.

O'Connor had been elected to the Society of Wood Engravers before the war, and after his demobilization, he taught art at Hastings School of Art and received commissions for illustrations from publishers and advertising agencies. In 1947, he and his wife moved to Essex, and he became Head of Colchester School of Art. From this period came three important books: his own *Canals, Barges and People* (Art & Technics, 1950) and two from the printer-publisher, Benhams of Colchester, *Essex Pie* (1952) and *An Essex Dozen* (1953). Other books followed, including an edition of Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (Rodale Press, 1955) and *A Pattern of People* (Hutchinson, 1959). This latter book was a collection of O'Connor's essays on people and their environment, and was illustrated with many engravings, some in two colours.

In 1964, O'Connor resigned from his full-time position to be able to spend more time on his own work. He taught in London on a part-time basis, produced more illustrations and prints, began to exhibit paintings, and wrote two books on the techniques and printing of wood engravings. The O'Connors moved to Scotland in 1975 where they still live in a fairly remote area, and he continues to work.

John O'Connor is a prolific artist in several media. His book illustrations are done mostly by wood engravings, though he has used linocuts, pen drawings and lithography. The engravings are quite distinctive: they are intricate and decorative and a second colour is often used, and occasionally some are more impressionistic than representational.

John O'Connor. A Pattern of People. *Hutchinson, 1959*

CASE 8

Edward Ardizzone, Lynton Lamb and Charles Keeping

WO ALMOST CONTEMPORARY illustrators of the twentieth century wrote and talked a great deal about the theory and art of book illustration: Edward Ardizzone and Lynton Lamb. Their views were, however, quite divergent. Lamb believed that a work of imagination did not need illustrations to explain it, for it is for the author to create his own moods and reach his own high points unaided. The role of the illustrator is to provide a parallel interpretation of the text. Good illustrations, which should exist as drawings in their own right, must reflect real life accurately.

Ardizzone, on the other hand, believed in the 'born illustrator' who drew from memory. The illustrator's task was to create a visual counterpart to the world of the writer, and the relationship between words and drawings had to be very close. The illustrator must be able to read and understand the meaning and implications of the book he has been asked to illustrate, and must then have the ability to draw from memory, to 'draw small' and to compose with figures, placing them together in space. In response to Lamb's insistence that an illustrator must have reference drawings from life at first hand, or at least from documentary sources at second hand, Ardizzone said that *his* 'born illustrator' was more excited by the printed word than by reality.

These differing points of view were put forward at length in various places but most clearly and fully in the first two issues of *Motif*. The reader may of course enjoy the work of both illustrators. Ardizzone's illustrations are generally concerned with contemporary life, but life untouched by political, religious or ideological conflicts. His approach is not satiric or moralistic but autobiographical, and his drawings are representational and humorous, always demonstrating his affection for people of all ages and all kinds. He was strongly opposed to the view that illustration could be merely decoration or graphic embellishment, and believed that illustrators need special skills that many artists, however good, may not possess.

EDWARD ARDIZZONE (1900-79) was born in Haiphong, Tonkin, but the family returned to England a few years after his birth. He worked as a clerk at the Eastern Telegraph Company in the City of London while he studied art at evening classes under Bernard Meninsky at the Westminster School of Art (1921-26). In 1927 he became a freelance artist, and his early commissions included drawing for many magazines. His work appeared frequently in the *Radio Times*, the programme magazine of the British Broadcasting Corporation which introduced many illustrators to the vast public which purchased the weekly. His drawings appeared first in 1932 (including a coloured cover for the Christmas issue) and he continued to work for the magazine until well into the 1950s. He also contributed a series of coloured drawings of Londoners to the *Strand Magazine* in 1942, and in one fifteen-month period (October 1946 – December 1947) drew all the coloured covers except one.

He illustrated his first book in 1929 (Le Fanu's *In a Glass Darkly*) and, using mostly line drawings and wash, became one of the best-loved and most prolific book artists

Edward Ardizzone. Long Ago When I Was Young, *by E. Nesbit. Whiting & Wheaton, 1966 (from the original pen drawing, Osborne Collection, Toronto Public Library)*

of the period, illustrating over one hundred seventy books. Edward Hodnett, author of an important book on English book illustration, grudgingly complained that Ardizzone

> could have done many more wonderful single illustrations and books of them, in black and white as well as in colour, if only he had been less productive and more demanding of himself at all times.

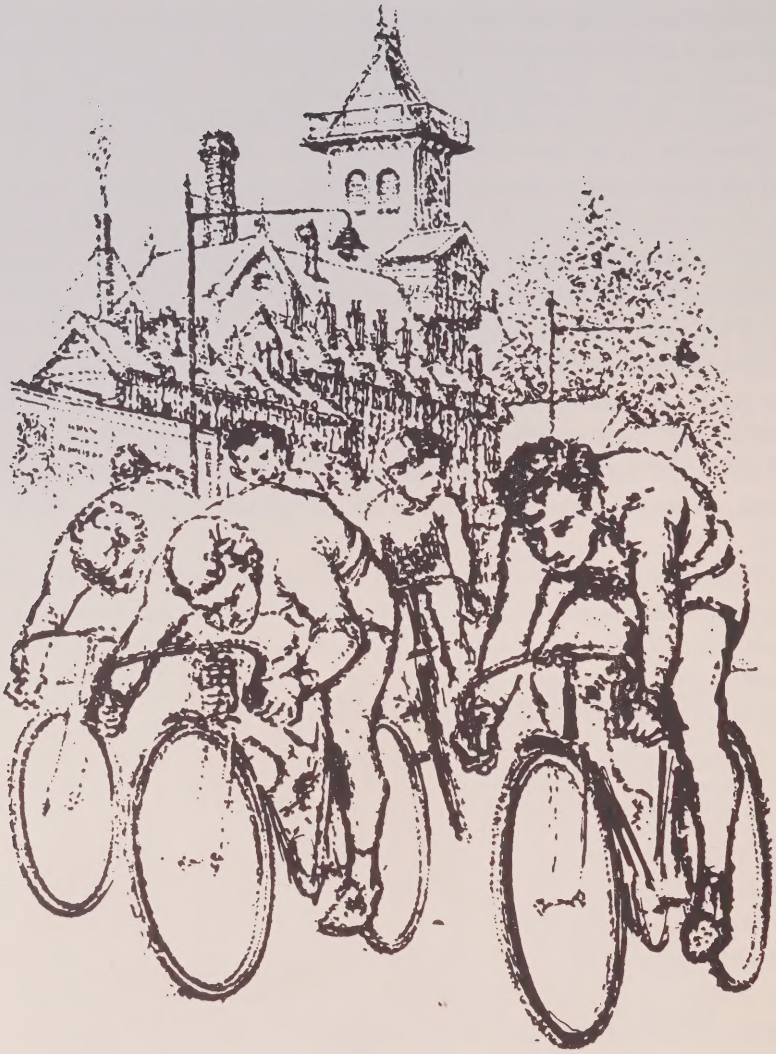
My Uncle Silas by H. E. Bates, published in 1939, shows how successful Ardizzone's line drawings could be, not only as illustrations to the story but as a decorative, integral part of the design of the page. In the period 1947-65 he did some of his finest illustrations for editions of Thackeray and Trollope, and Trollope's *Barchester Towers* (Oxford University Press, 1953), and Thackeray's *The Newcomes* (Limited Editions Club, 1954) and *Henry Esmond* (Limited Editions Club, 1956) are examples on show in the exhibition. In 1966 he produced more than twenty-five splendidly evocative pen drawings for *Long Ago When I Was Young* (Whiting and Wheaton) by E. Nesbit. The original drawings for this book and the drawings and watercolours he did for his own *Tim and Ginger*, on display in this exhibition, are on loan from the Osborne Collection, Toronto Public Library.

Ardizzone also illustrated many books for children. His reputation is firmly grounded on the illustrations he produced for Eleanor Farjeon's books and on his own books which include *Little Tim and the Brave Sea Captain* (Oxford University Press, 1936), *Tim All Alone* (OUP, 1956), *Diana and Her Rhinocerous* (OUP, 1964), and *Tim and Ginger* (OUP, 1965). Lynton Lamb commended Ardizzone for making

> no change whatsoever in his 'style' whether he is illustrating a nursery rhyme or *Manon Lescaut*. And this is as it should be ... [He possessed] the ability to enter and open with some key or other the mind of a child.

Farjeon's *The Little Bookroom* won the Carnegie medal in 1955 and the Hans Christian Andersen Medal in 1956; while for his own *Tim All Alone* he was awarded the Kate Greenaway Medal in 1956.

Besides the work he did for magazines and books, Ardizzone produced book jackets, a series of posters for the whisky firm of Johnny Walker, posters for London Transport, menus and wine labels for a variety of customers, and a birthday telegram for the General Post Office. He was an Official War Artist (1940-45); taught illustration at the Camberwell School of Art (1948-52); worked for UNESCO in India (1952-53); and



Lynton Lamb. County Town. *Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1950*

taught etching at the Royal College of Art (1953-61). He was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Art in 1962, a Royal Academician (1970) and created a LCBE in 1971.

LYNTON LAMB (1907-77) was born in Nizambabad, India, but like Ardizzone, soon returned to England with his family and spent his childhood in London. Forced to leave school because of the death of his father, he worked in a real estate office for a year, studying life drawing under Randolph Schwabe in the evenings at Camberwell School of Art, before he became a full-time student at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London, where Noel Rooke and Bernard Meninsky were among his teachers.

When he left the Central School, Lamb joined the Oxford University Press. His first job was to redesign the bindings of its prayer books and Bibles (in 1953 he designed the binding of the Coronation Bible, and the Fisher Library possesses one of the twenty-five copies produced), but he soon began designing jackets for the 'World's Classics' series, and worked on numerous other projects, including an illustrated edition of *Madam Bovary*. The advent of the war put a stop to this, and Lamb was drafted into the army where he worked for six years as a camouflage staff officer. After his army service, he continued with OUP, one of his first responsibilities being to work as art editor of the 'Oxford Illustrated Trollope'.

Lamb had a much more diverse career than Ardizzone. Throughout his life, he worked as a painter (his first exhibition was held at the Storran Gallery in London in 1936), and in 1939 he became a member of the influential London Group. He was involved in the preparation of architectural decorations for the Orient Liners (1935-50); he was head of lithography at the Slade School of Art (1950-71) and at the Royal College of Art (1956-70); and was President of the Society of Industrial Artists and Designers (1951-53). He designed postage stamps, numerous book jackets, and did a great deal of other commercial work.

Despite this diversity, Lamb was, above all, an important and influential book illustrator. In accordance with his own views that illustrations should reflect life accurately, he spent much time in detailed and thorough research for any book which he illustrated. When he actually got down to the work of drawing, he employed a variety of techniques for his illustrations — wood engraving for *The Log of the Bounty* (1937); pen and ink drawings for his *County Town* (1950); chalk drawn directly on

lithographic stones for Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her?* (1948) and George Eliot's *Silas Marner* (1953); and chalk on zinc plates for Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1956).

The illustrations in *County Town* (1950) are typical of Lamb's best work. In 1940 he had moved to a village near Chelmsford in Essex, and he lived there for the rest of his life. The book describes the town and its inhabitants, which he observes with sympathetic detachment, and includes over sixty drawings in pen and ink, mostly drawn on the spot. As Mackie writes, his detachment

> did not prevent him from making acid pictorial comments on some of his characters ... Characterization is a strength of his illustrative work. He conveyed to paper the persona of a particular type with a minimum of pen strokes.

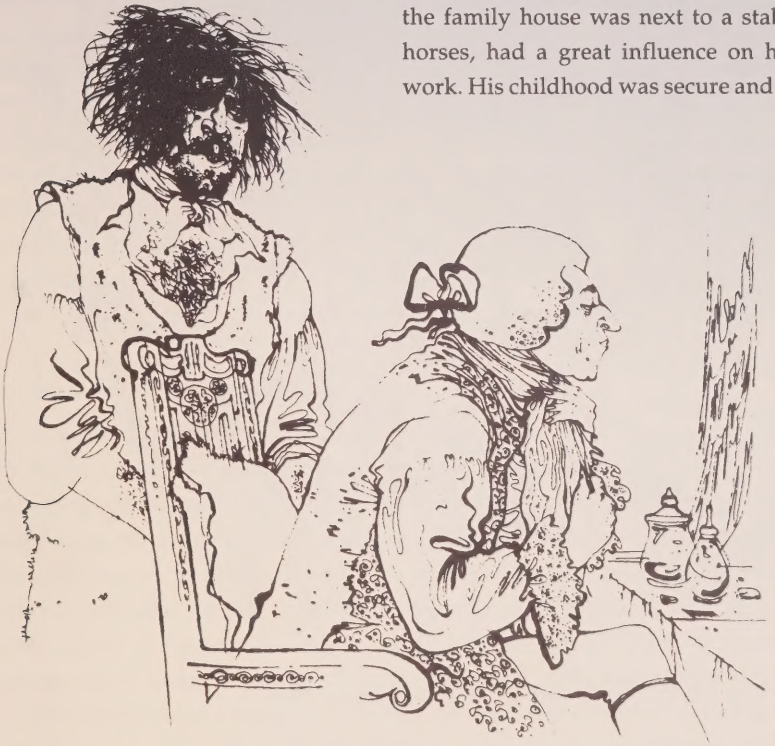
Lamb achieved many honours during his lifetime, including the election to the Society of Wood Engravers, the fellowship of the Society of Industrial Artists and the Royal Society of Arts. In 1974 he was named Royal Designer to Industry. In 1966 he wrote to his friend George Mackie (himself a notable book designer and illustrator):

> I am gnawed by guilt for having gone for almost a year without painting, having been caught in the fly-papers of literary pursuits; and while at my back I hear etc., I gnaw my knuckles making up my mind as to which is the one talent which for me is death to hide. I shall be caught out in the end devising the appropriate calligraphy for writing on water ...

In 1973 he suffered the first of several strokes, which left him partially paralysed for the rest of his life, and he died in September 1977.

CHARLES KEEPING (1924-88) was born in Lambeth, East London. He left school when he was fourteen years old, was apprenticed to a printer and then was conscripted into the Royal Navy during the Second World War. When the war was over, he studied art at the Regent Street Polytechnic and had various jobs (including a time as cartoonist on the *Daily Herald*) before he started working as a book illustrator. In 1956 he was commissioned by the Oxford University Press to illustrate stories for children written by Rosemary Sutcliffe, and with the encouragement of the doyen of children's book editors, Mabel George of OUP, was thus launched on a career which made him one of the better known and more prolific illustrators of the period 1960 through the 1980s.

His upbringing in a working-class area, where the family house was next to a stable for cart horses, had a great influence on his life and work. His childhood was secure and happy and



*Charles Keeping.*Barnaby Rudge, *by Charles Dickens. Folio Society, 1987*

Charles Keeping. Oliver Twist, *by Charles Dickens. Folio Society, 1984*

had an unusually important effect in shaping both the man and the artist. His wife has written that

> His early childhood was his whole life, he based all his books on it, and generally tried to recreate as much of it as possible.

When he was working his way through art school, he was for some time a gas meter man in poor areas of London, and discovered people living in conditions which were distinctly Dickensian. He used this experience later when illustrating Dickens for the Folio Society, and he used his memories of working horses in several of his books.

Much of his work was done for children, including many picture books which he wrote as well as illustrated. Along with Brian Wildsmith and John Burningham, he made brilliant use of colour and the new printing techniques, with many double-page spreads, using a mixture of gouache, tempera, watercolour and inks. He was an early enthusiast for 'Plasticowell', the grained plastic sheets designed by the printers, Cowells of Ipswich, for lithographic illustrations. His theory of illustration was that, in his books, the illustrations were as important as the words; they do not merely reiterate what the text says but are the response of the artist to the story. On his illustrations for *Beowulf* he wrote,

> If half the book is going to be drawings, the bloke doing the drawings has to have as much to say as the writer. I don't see why words and pictures in a book like this necessarily have to come together or be the same. The drawings can show a sympathy which the writer may not. In a way you get two stories. It's fun doing something like that.

Keeping's illustrations are usually dramatic and often sinister, and those he did for Kevin Crossley-Holland's prose version of *Beowulf* (Bodley Head, 1961) are fine examples of this style. His view of the story differs from Crossley-Holland's, and he takes a less heroic view of it. To Keeping, Grendel is more to be pitied as a deformed being rather than as a 'tough guy'. He is sad and frightened as he knows that Beowulf is going to kill him. Grendel's mother is depicted as a more ferocious creature because of the death of her son. On display is his original pen drawing of Grundel fighting with Beowulf, on loan from the Osborne Collection of the Toronto Public Library.

These illustrations are done in Indian ink with a steel-nibbed or bamboo pen, with a background wash. He used pen drawings also for his magnificent illustrations to Dickens. His commitment to illustrate the complete Dickens for the Folio Society was a

project of immense size and importance. This was the first full edition ever to be illustrated by a single illustrator, and was completed just before his death. Keeping was the perfect modern artist to illustrate Dickens. It was essentially Dickens's London that Keeping grew up to know and love, and this clearly enabled the illustrator to create a period atmosphere and delineate the characters which fill Dickens's novels.

A recent book on the illustrator writes of his work thus:

> The art of illustrating literature which is of or about the past differs from that of illustrating contemporary writing, in that both artist and reader tend to set out on equal terms with a generalised picture of life and appearances at a given time. Some historical illustrators seek to inform or persuade by raising a superstructure of expert period detail on this ready-made basis, but this was never Keeping's purpose. From early in his career he had regarded an excessive concern for stylistic accuracy in costume and furniture and such matters as so much clutter which was liable to get in the way of the moral and physical action which was his main concern. He was keenly sensitive to matters of belief and atmosphere as well as material living conditions within those societies which he depicted repeatedly; and increasingly these became almost as real to him as those images of cockney or Victorian London which had been virtually within his childhood reach.

Keeping died in May 1988. Leon Garfield, many of whose books Keeping illustrated, wrote of the artist in an obituary in *The Independent:*

> He was a fastidious artist possessed of a wonderfully keen and critical mind ... we, who were fortunate enough to have written books that he illustrated, were always flattered by the care, integrity and beauty of his work. And the humour, too.

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Uncaptioned Illustrations

Front and rear covers: Robert Gibbings. *Till I End My Song*. Dent, 1957

Half-title illustration: Gwen Raverat. *The London Bookbinders*, by Ellic Howe. Dropmore Press, 1950

Frontispiece: John Buckland Wright. *Endymion*, by John Keats. Golden Cockerel Press, 1947

Title-page, pp. 11, 66: Eric Ravilious. *Note Book and Diary*. Kynoch Press, 1933

p. 5: Edward Ardizzone. *My Uncle Silas*, by H.E. Bates. Cape, 1939

p. 40: Reynolds Stone. *Boxwood: Sixteen Engravings by Reynolds Stone, Illustrated in Verse by Sylvia Townsend Warner*. Monotype Corporation, 1957

p. 55: William Heath Robinson. *The Water Babies*, by Charles Kingsley. Constable, 1915

p. 76: Lynton Lamb. *Can You Forgive Her?* by Anthony Trollope. Oxford University Press, 1948

p. 82: J. Buckland Wright. *Hymn to Proserpine*, by Algernon Charles Swinburne. Golden Cockerel Press, 1944

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